# My Utmost for His Highest – 9/3/19

# Pouring Out the Water of Satisfaction



He would not drink it, but poured it out to the Lord. —[2 Samuel 23:16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=2+Samuel+23%3A16)

What has been like “water from the well of Bethlehem” to you recently— love, friendship, or maybe some spiritual blessing ([2 Samuel 23:16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Samuel+23:16))? Have you taken whatever it may be, even at the risk of damaging your own soul, simply to satisfy yourself? If you have, then you cannot pour it out “to the Lord.” You can never set apart for God something that you desire for yourself to achieve your own satisfaction. If you try to satisfy yourself with a blessing from God, it will corrupt you. You must sacrifice it, pouring it out to God— something that your common sense says is an absurd waste.

How can I pour out “to the Lord” natural love and spiritual blessings? There is only one way— I must make a determination in my mind to do so. There are certain things other people do that could never be received by someone who does not know God, because it is humanly impossible to repay them. As soon as I realize that something is too wonderful for me, that I am not worthy to receive it, and that it is not meant for a human being at all, I must pour it out “to the Lord.” Then these very things that have come to me will be poured out as “rivers of living water” all around me ([John 7:38](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+7:38)). And until I pour these things out to God, they actually endanger those I love, as well as myself, because they will be turned into lust. Yes, we can be lustful in things that are not sordid and vile. Even love must be transformed by being poured out “to the Lord.”

If you have become bitter and sour, it is because when God gave you a blessing you hoarded it. Yet if you had poured it out to Him, you would have been the sweetest person on earth. If you are always keeping blessings to yourself and never learning to pour out anything “to the Lord,” other people will never have their vision of God expanded through you.

**WISDOM FROM OSWALD CHAMBERS**

The place for the comforter is not that of one who preaches, but of the comrade who says nothing, but prays to God about the matter. The biggest thing you can do for those who are suffering is not to talk platitudes, not to ask questions, but to get into contact with God, and the “greater works” will be done by prayer (see John 14:12–13). Baffled to Fight Better, 56 R

# CCEL – 9/3/19

**Neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters.**—[EXO. 13:7.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Exod.13.html" \l "Exod.13.7)

The fear of the Lord is to hate evil.—Abhor that which is evil.—Abstain from all appearance of evil.—Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.

Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.—Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.—Such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.—In him is no sin.

[Prov. 8:13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Prov.8.html" \l "Prov.8.13). -[Rom. 12:9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.12.html" \l "Rom.12.9). -[I Thes. 5:22](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iThess.5.html" \l "iThess.5.22). -[Heb. 12:15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.12.html" \l "Heb.12.15).[Psa. 66:18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.66.html" \l "Ps.66.18).[I Cor. 5:6-8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.5.html" \l "iCor.5.6). -[I Cor. 11:28](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.11.html" \l "iCor.11.28).[II Tim. 2:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiTim.2.html" \l "iiTim.2.19). -[Heb. 7:26](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.7.html" \l "Heb.7.26). -[I John 3:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.3.html" \l "iJohn.3.5).

“Thou whom my soul loveth.” **[Song of Solomon 1:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Song.1.html" \l "Song.1.7)**

It is well to be able, without any “if” or “but,” to say of the Lord Jesus—“Thou whom my soul loveth.” Many can only say of Jesus that they hope they love him; they trust they love him; but only a poor and shallow experience will be content to stay here. No one ought to give any rest to his spirit till he feels quite sure about a matter of such vital importance. We ought not to be satisfied with a superficial hope that Jesus loves us, and with a bare trust that we love him. The old saints did not generally speak with “buts,” and “ifs,” and “hopes,” and “trusts,” but they spoke positively and plainly. “I know whom I have believed,” saith Paul. “I know that my Redeemer liveth,” saith Job. Get positive knowledge of your love of Jesus, and be not satisfied till you can speak of your interest in him as a reality, which you have made sure by having received the witness of the Holy Spirit, and his seal upon your soul by faith.

True love to Christ is in every case the Holy Spirit’s work, and must be wrought in the heart by him. He is the efficient cause of it; but the logical reason why we love Jesus lies in himself. Why do we love Jesus? Because he first loved us. Why do we love Jesus? Because he “gave himself for us.” We have life through his death; we have peace through his blood. Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor. Why do we love Jesus? Because of the excellency of his person. We are filled with a sense of his beauty! an admiration of his charms! a consciousness of his infinite perfection! His greatness, goodness, and loveliness, in one resplendent ray, combine to enchant the soul till it is so ravished that it exclaims, “Yea, he is altogether lovely.” Blessed love this—a love which binds the heart with chains more soft than silk, and yet more firm than adamant!

# Word Live – 9/3/19

# Ready and waiting

## Prepare

Our culture values ‘doing’ over ‘being’. Yet God often gives us long seasons of waiting before he speaks or acts. Before you dive into the study today, take a few minutes to sit quietly and wait for him.



## Bible passage: Nehemiah 2:1–10

##### Artaxerxes Sends Nehemiah to Jerusalem

1 In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before; 2 so the king asked me, "Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart."   
      I was very much afraid, 3 but I said to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my fathers are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?"

4 The king said to me, "What is it you want?"   
      Then I prayed to the God of heaven, 5 and I answered the king, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it."

6 Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, "How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?" It pleased the king to send me; so I set a time.

7 I also said to him, "If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah? 8 And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the king's forest, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?" And because the gracious hand of my God was upon me, the king granted my requests. 9 So I went to the governors of Trans-Euphrates and gave them the king's letters. The king had also sent army officers and cavalry with me.

10 When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about this, they were very much disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites.

## Explore

**Delay in proceedings**

Four months pass between the end of Nehemiah 1 and the beginning of Nehemiah 2. We ended yesterday with Nehemiah all prayed-up and ready to go. He asked for success and favour ‘today’, but then didn’t proceed for months. We don’t know why. Historians suggest the king might have been at his winter palace with different staff, or perhaps Nehemiah just sensed that the time was not right for some other reason.

**Not time wasted**

Have you ever found the same thing? God calls you to something, you get excited and feel bold to move ahead, but then nothing happens. The doors stay closed, the people you need to speak to go on holiday or are off sick. It can be disappointing and frustrating. Often we can doubt ourselves – did we really hear God saying that? Look at verses 7 and 8, though. They illustrate that Nehemiah had used the time of waiting to give some serious thought to what he would need for his venture. Time spent waiting doesn’t have to be time wasted.

[Jennie Pollock](https://www.wordlive.org/AboutWordLive/Contributors/M-P/3527733.id#.VknC1XbhCUk)

## Respond

What are you waiting for? What has God put on your heart to do for him but not yet opened the doors for? Are you waiting well, planning and preparing so you are ready when the time comes? Ask God how you should use this time.

## Deeper Bible study

As cup-bearer ([Neh 1:11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Neh+1%3A11&version=NIV)), Nehemiah was a highly trusted confidant of the king. Although living in Persia, his heart was in Jerusalem and he was distraught by Hanani’s news ([Neh 1:3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Neh+1%3A3&version=NIV)). No doubt earlier reports of Ezra’s rebuilding project had been encouraging, and Nehemiah must have been unaware of Artaxerxes’ decision to terminate it ([Ezra 4:23](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezra+4%3A23&version=NIV)). However, the shock led Nehemiah to discover a new vocation! Take a moment to pray for people you may know who are suddenly confronted by adversity. Ask God to awaken them to discover new potential with which to serve him and others.

Nehemiah knew he must act as well as pray. For four months he pleaded with God for guidance and assistance. Opportunity came one day when he was serving the king and queen as they dined together: Artaxerxes asked his wine steward why he was sad (v 2). The royal request terrified Nehemiah. In the Persian court a gloomy appearance was an indicator of potential disloyalty! Nehemiah held his nerve, however, and explained his grief. Fear did not dissuade him from breaching imperial protocol. After a flash prayer (v 4b) and with divine help (v 8) he took the plunge. In effect, he asked an autocratic king to revoke a previous decree ([Ezra 4:21](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezra+4%3A21&version=NIV)). It could all have gone disastrously wrong.

Nehemiah is an outstanding example of a lay person furthering God’s kingdom in the public sphere. Not a prophet, priest or Levite, but a civil servant, he persuaded the most powerful ruler in the world to reverse his imperial policy so that it favoured rather than prejudiced the people of God (see [Ezra 4:18–23](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezra+4%3A18%E2%80%9323&version=NIV)). Pray now for Christians in the civil service, in government and in parliament, that the gracious hand of their God may be on them (see v 8).

Pray before beginning your daily activities and throughout the day. As you make each choice that life demands, offer a flash prayer to God for guidance and help.

[Fergus MacDonald](https://www.wordlive.org/AboutWordLive/Contributors/M-P/3527733.id#.VknC1XbhCUk)

## But this I know…

Jeremiah warns us that our hearts are deceitful (see [Jeremiah 17:9](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah%2017:9;&version=72;)) but we’re often too quick to dismiss the promptings of God as something we’re imagining. On other occasions we feel convinced that he has spoken and rush into something… and it all fizzles out.   
  
How can we avoid being so hit and miss? And how can we be sure that we are not deluding ourselves? Here are some tips:  
  
• Does the desire match or clash with scripture and what we know about God’s purpose and promises ([Nehemiah 1:8,9](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nehemiah%201:8,9;&version=72;))?  
   
• Is there an inner pressure or passion in you to do it ([Nehemiah 1:4](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nehemiah%201:4;&version=72;))?   
  
• What has prayer revealed to you about it ([Nehemiah 1:5–11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nehemiah%201:5–11;&version=72;))?   
  
• Do you have peace in your head and heart, having surrendered the matter to God (see [Philippians 4:6,7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%204:6,7;&version=72;))?   
  
• Are there pragmatic ‘green lights’ that enable you to do it ([Nehemiah 2:2–6](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nehemiah%202:2–6;&version=72;))?   
  
Here’s an example – in this case, the kind of confirmation you might need to convince you that you’re called to be an accountant!  
  
• Scripture is not specific, but calls us to be upright in our work.   
  
YES, THAT’S MY DESIRE!  
   
• You love numbers and want to help people.   
  
THAT’S ME!   
  
• God has not told you ‘no’ as you prayed.   
  
THAT’S RIGHT!   
  
• Your boss has agreed the company will pay for a day release course for you to train in accountancy. YES, HE HAS!   
  
• It feels right to go forward.   
  
YES, I HAVE PEACE – EVERYTHING CONFIRMS THIS IS RIGHT!   
  
Is there a call on your life that you’ve yet to test? How does it measure up to the yardsticks above?   
  
Sarah Bingham

# Today in the Word – 9/3/19

# Waiting on God

**Read:** [**Psalm 5**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+5)**[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+5#fen-NIV-13975a)**]**

#### For the director of music. For pipes. A psalm of David.

1Listen to my words, Lord,  
    consider my lament.  
2Hear my cry for help,  
    my King and my God,  
    for to you I pray.

3In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice;  
    in the morning I lay my requests before you  
    and wait expectantly.  
4For you are not a God who is pleased with wickedness;  
    with you, evil people are not welcome.  
5The arrogant cannot stand  
    in your presence.  
You hate all who do wrong;  
6    you destroy those who tell lies.  
The bloodthirsty and deceitful  
    you, Lord, detest.  
7But I, by your great love,  
    can come into your house;  
in reverence I bow down  
    toward your holy temple.

8Lead me, Lord, in your righteousness  
    because of my enemies—  
    make your way straight before me.  
9Not a word from their mouth can be trusted;  
    their heart is filled with malice.  
Their throat is an open grave;  
    with their tongues they tell lies.  
10Declare them guilty, O God!  
    Let their intrigues be their downfall.  
Banish them for their many sins,  
    for they have rebelled against you.  
11But let all who take refuge in you be glad;  
    let them ever sing for joy.  
Spread your protection over them,  
    that those who love your name may rejoice in you.

12Surely, Lord, you bless the righteous;  
    you surround them with your favor as with a shield.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Psalm 5:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+5#en-NIV-13975) In Hebrew texts 5:1-12 is numbered 5:2-13.

Several years ago, passengers at a Houston airport were complaining about how long they had to wait at the baggage claim. So, airport executives hired more baggage handlers and cut the wait time down to eight minutes. However, the complaints did not stop. Airport executives then tried a different approach. Instead of trying to get the bags unloaded faster, they moved the baggage claim so it was a seven-minute walk from the arrival gates. The complaints stopped.

In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and await expectantly. Psalm 5:3

Waiting can be difficult and painful. This is especially true when we do not know how long we will wait for an answer to our prayers. In today’s Scripture reading, David describes how he cried out to the Lord, laid his re-quests before Him, and then waited expectantly (v. 3). David’s particular problem was his enemies. Men were making false accusations against him (v. 9). These men were arrogant, bloodthirsty, and rebellious against God (vv. 5, 6, 10). It was a situation so difficult that it caused David to lament (v. 1). The word translated lament literally means “groan” or “sigh,” a kind of confused muttering that comes from the depths of an anguished soul.

In the midst of his suffering, David held on to hope. He knew God and trusted in His character. God was not “pleased with wickedness” (v. 4). He could not stand the arrogant and wrongdoer (v. 5). He detested the bloodthirsty and deceitful (v. 6). He had also made a covenant commitment to David (v. 7). David asked God to be true to His character. That He would denounce the guilty and protect the faithful (vv. 10–11). But it was just that, a request. God would be the one to act in his defense. As Eugene Peterson reminds us, “Waiting in prayer is a disciplined refusal to act before God acts.”

### Apply the Word

We have all experienced times when life feels desperate. In those times, we can do what David modeled in this psalm. We can be honest with God about our plight. We can pray according to God’s attributes. And we can wait for God to act. Our hope is grounded in the character of God. There is no more sure foundation than that.

### Pray with Us

For the next two days, please join us in prayer for our library employees. Today we pray for James Preston, Jonathan McDaniel, and Rosie Quintana, thanking God for all the resources they provide our students, faculty, and staff.

## BY Ryan Cook

# Our Daily Bread – 9/3/19

# It’s Slippery Out Here!

 **Read:** [**Psalm 141**](https://www.odb.org/2019/09/03/its-slippery-out-here)

#### A psalm of David.

1I call to you, Lord, come quickly to me;  
    hear me when I call to you.  
2May my prayer be set before you like incense;  
    may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.

3Set a guard over my mouth, Lord;  
    keep watch over the door of my lips.  
4Do not let my heart be drawn to what is evil  
    so that I take part in wicked deeds  
along with those who are evildoers;  
    do not let me eat their delicacies.

5Let a righteous man strike me—that is a kindness;  
    let him rebuke me—that is oil on my head.  
My head will not refuse it,  
    for my prayer will still be against the deeds of evildoers.

6Their rulers will be thrown down from the cliffs,  
    and the wicked will learn that my words were well spoken.  
7They will say, “As one plows and breaks up the earth,  
    so our bones have been scattered at the mouth of the grave.”

8But my eyes are fixed on you, Sovereign Lord;  
    in you I take refuge—do not give me over to death.  
9Keep me safe from the traps set by evildoers,  
    from the snares they have laid for me.  
10Let the wicked fall into their own nets,  
    while I pass by in safety.

Do not let my heart be drawn to what is evil. [Psalm 141:4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Psalm+141%3A4)

Years ago, when I was learning to ski, I followed my son Josh down what appeared to be a gentle slope. With my eyes on him I failed to notice he turned down the steepest hill on the mountain, and I found myself careening down the slope, completely out of control. I cratered, of course.

Psalm 141 shows how we can easily find ourselves slipping down sin’s slope. Prayer is one of the ways we stay alert to those slopes: “Do not let my heart be drawn to what is evil” (v. 4) is a plea that echoes the Lord’s Prayer almost exactly: “Lead [me] not into temptation, but deliver [me] from the evil one” (Matthew 6:13). In His goodness, God hears and answers this prayer.

And then I find in this psalm another agent of grace: a faithful friend. “Let a righteous man strike me—that is a kindness; let him rebuke me—that is oil on my head. My head will not refuse it” (Psalm 141:5). Temptations are subtle. We’re not always aware that we’re going wrong. A true friend can be objective. “Faithful are the wounds of a friend” (Proverbs 27:6 nkjv). It’s hard to accept rebuke, but if we see the wounding as a “kindness” it can become an anointing that puts us back on the path of obedience.

May we be open to truth from a trusted friend and rely on God through prayer.

By:  [David H. Roper](https://odb.org/author/davidhroper/)

#### Reflect & Pray

What slippery slopes do you gravitate toward? In what ways can you set a guard over your heart?

Father, please keep my feet from straying. Help me to listen to You and good friends.

#### Insight

We easily understand David’s prayer, “Keep me safe from the traps set by evildoers” (Psalm 141:9). But we can also relate to his plea for protection from himself: “Set a guard over my mouth, Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips” (v. 3). David may have been fleeing from King Saul when he wrote this psalm. The restraint in his words matches his behavior toward Saul. David refused to harm “the Lord’s anointed” when he had the opportunity (1 Samuel 24:1–7; 26:7–24). He understood the temptation to say something inflammatory or to succumb to the “advice” to assassinate Saul (26:8). This may explain his reference to the “wicked deeds” (Psalm 141:4) he wished to avoid. David sought justice but left it up to God.

# God Calling – 9/3/19

# Live in the Unseen

**Our Lord, the God of the troubled and the weary, come and save us.**

I am your Savior. Not only from the weight of sin, but from the weight of care, from misery, and depression, from want and woe, from faintness and heartache. Your Savior.

Remember that you are living really in the Unseen - that is the Real Life.

Lift up your heads from earth's troubles, and view the glories of the Kingdom. Higher and higher each day see more of Heaven. Speak to Me. Long for Me. Rest in Me. Abide in Me. No restless bringing Me your burdens, and then feverishly lifting them again and bearing them away.

No! Abide in Me. Not for one moment losing the consciousness of My Strength and Protection.

As a child in its mother's arms, stay sheltered and at rest.

The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly.  Proverbs 20:27

# My Utmost for His Highest – 9/4/19

# His!



They were Yours, You gave them to Me… —[John 17:6](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+17%3A6)

A missionary is someone in whom the Holy Spirit has brought about this realization: “You are not your own” ([1 Corinthians 6:19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+6:19)). To say, “I am not my own,” is to have reached a high point in my spiritual stature. The true nature of that life in actual everyday confusion is evidenced by the deliberate giving up of myself to another Person through a sovereign decision, and that Person is Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit interprets and explains the nature of Jesus to me to make me one with my Lord, not that I might simply become a trophy for His showcase. Our Lord never sent any of His disciples out on the basis of what He had done for them. It was not until after the resurrection, when the disciples had perceived through the power of the Holy Spirit who Jesus really was, that He said, “Go” (Matthew 28:19; also see [Luke 24:49](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+24:49) and [Acts 1:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+1:8)).

“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple” ([Luke 14:26](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+14:26)). He was not saying that this person cannot be good and upright, but that he cannot be someone over whom Jesus can write the word Mine. Any one of the relationships our Lord mentions in this verse can compete with our relationship with Him. I may prefer to belong to my mother, or to my wife, or to myself, but if that is the case, then, Jesus said, “[You] cannot be My disciple.” This does not mean that I will not be saved, but it does mean that I cannot be entirely His.

Our Lord makes His disciple His very own possession, becoming responsible for him. “…you shall be witnesses to Me…” ([Acts 1:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+1:8)). The desire that comes into a disciple is not one of doing anything for Jesus, but of being a perfect delight to Him. The missionary’s secret is truly being able to say, “I am His, and He is accomplishing His work and His purposes through me.”

Be entirely His!

**WISDOM FROM OSWALD CHAMBERS**

We should always choose our books as God chooses our friends, just a bit beyond us, so that we have to do our level best to keep up with them. Shade of His Hand, 1216 L

# CCEL – 9/4/19

**Sit still, my daughter.**—[RUTH 3:18.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ruth.3.html" \l "Ruth.3.18)

Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be fainthearted.—Be still, and know that I am God.—Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?—The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

Mary . . . sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.—Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.—In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.—Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.

Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.

He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. His heart is established.

He that believeth shall not make haste.

[Isa. 7:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.7.html" \l "Isa.7.4). -[Psa. 46:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.46.html" \l "Ps.46.10). -[John 11:40](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.11.html" \l "John.11.40). -[Isa. 2:17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.2.html" \l "Isa.2.17).[Luke 10:39](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Luke.10.html" \l "Luke.10.39). -[Luke 10:42](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Luke.10.html" \l "Luke.10.42). -[Isa. 30:15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.30.html" \l "Isa.30.15). -[Psa. 4:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.4.html" \l "Ps.4.4).[Psa. 37:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.37.html" \l "Ps.37.7).[Psa. 112:7,8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.112.html" \l "Ps.112.7).[Isa. 28:16](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.28.html" \l "Isa.28.16).

“I will; be thou clean.” **[Mark 1:41](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Mark.1.html" \l "Mark.1.41)**

Primeval darkness heard the Almighty fiat, “light be,” and straightway light was, and the word of the Lord Jesus is equal in majesty to that ancient word of power. Redemption like Creation has its word of might. Jesus speaks and it is done. Leprosy yielded to no human remedies, but it fled at once at the Lord’s “I will.” The disease exhibited no hopeful signs or tokens of recovery, nature contributed nothing to its own healing, but the unaided word effected the entire work on the spot and forever. The sinner is in a plight more miserable than the leper; let him imitate his example and go to Jesus, “beseeching him and kneeling down to him.” Let him exercise what little faith he has, even though it should go no further than “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;” and there need be no doubt as to the result of the application. Jesus heals all who come, and casts out none. In reading the narrative in which our morning’s text occurs, it is worthy of devout notice that Jesus touched the leper. This unclean person had broken through the regulations of the ceremonial law and pressed into the house, but Jesus so far from chiding him broke through the law himself in order to meet him. He made an interchange with the leper, for while he cleansed him, he contracted by that touch a Levitical defilement. Even so Jesus Christ was made sin for us, although in himself he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. O that poor sinners would go to Jesus, believing in the power of his blessed substitutionary work, and they would soon learn the power of his gracious touch. That hand which multiplied the loaves, which saved sinking Peter, which upholds afflicted saints, which crowns believers, that same hand will touch every seeking sinner, and in a moment make him clean. The love of Jesus is the source of salvation. He loves, he looks, he touches us, we live.

# Word Live – 9/4/19

# No place for lone rangers

## Prepare

Pray for your church today, and pray for the lonely and isolated who struggle to get fellowship. If you are isolated and feeling alone, know that today people are praying for you and asking God to meet your needs.



## Bible passage: Nehemiah 2:11–20

##### Nehemiah Inspects Jerusalem's Walls

11 I went to Jerusalem, and after staying there three days 12 I set out during the night with a few men. I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem. There were no mounts with me except the one I was riding on.

13 By night I went out through the Valley Gate toward the Jackal Well and the Dung Gate, examining the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken down, and its gates, which had been destroyed by fire. 14 Then I moved on toward the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was not enough room for my mount to get through; 15 so I went up the valley by night, examining the wall. Finally, I turned back and reentered through the Valley Gate. 16 The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, because as yet I had said nothing to the Jews or the priests or nobles or officials or any others who would be doing the work.

17 Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace." 18 I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me.   
      They replied, "Let us start rebuilding." So they began this good work.

19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us. "What is this you are doing?" they asked. "Are you rebelling against the king?"

20 I answered them by saying, "The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it."

## Explore

**Band of brothers**

These first chapters of Nehemiah could be a Hollywood film script, couldn’t they? We’ve had the opening scene – obscure servant hears of a crisis and decides to fix it. Scene 2 – he makes his plans and is commissioned by the king. Now in scene 3 we find him assembling a band of brothers and giving his inspirational speech.

**It takes teamwork**

God rarely calls us to be lone rangers. Even great pioneers, who seem to be striking out boldly alone, know they need the prayer, support and counsel of others. Leaders need friends and they need disciples. Nehemiah knew he could not complete this great task alone; it was going to take teamwork.

**Wise approach**

Look again at his patient, wise approach: ‘after staying there three days…’ (v 11), ‘I set out … with a few others’ (v 12), ‘I had not told anyone…’ (v 12), ‘as yet I had said nothing to [those] who would be doing the work’ (v 16). What can we learn from his methods?

**'Baddies'**

Another Hollywood-style moment is the introduction of the ‘baddies’ in yesterday’s passage and again today in verse 19. We’ll hear more of them tomorrow...

[Jennie Pollock](https://www.wordlive.org/AboutWordLive/Contributors/M-P/3527733.id#.VknC1XbhCUk)

## Respond

Where do you see yourself in this story? Are you a visionary leader, a supporter, one of ‘those who would be doing the work’, an opponent? What is God saying to you about the role you are playing?

## Deeper Bible study

After his 900-mile trek from Susa, Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem. The military retinue (v 9) would have underlined his imperial authority, yet he is cautious rather than officious. He waits three days, possibly to rest after his 14-week journey, possibly to gauge local morale, and almost certainly to pray. Then he makes a secret nocturnal survey of the walls to see for himself the extent of the damage. Only then does he share with community leaders and available citizens what God is prompting him to do. Up to this point in his memoir, Nehemiah has told us how he approaches God and how he approached the king ([Neh 1:5–11; 2:1–10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Neh+1%3A5%E2%80%9311%3B+2%3A1%E2%80%9310&version=NIV)). Now he begins to share how he deals with the rank and file.

Paul tells us that there are lessons for Christians in Old Testament incidents ([Rom 15:4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom+15%3A4&version=NIV)). Those engaged in revitalising weary and dying churches can find encouragement and hope in Nehemiah’s rehabilitation project. Rejuvenating churches that have lost their sense of vision and mission is no less challenging than the task Nehemiah faced in Jerusalem.

Nehemiah is both decisive and diplomatic. He persuades rather than dictates (v 17). He stresses his Jewish identity more than his imperial authority. He doesn’t underrate ‘the trouble’ which had brought ‘disgrace’ upon the people of God. He inspires trust among ordinary citizens (v 18b). He publicly acknowledges God’s vital role in the rebuilding project (vs 18,20). He leads well, because he himself is a follower of the God of heaven (v 20). Nehemiah majors on what today are called the ‘soft’ skills of leadership, but when the occasion demands firm action he doesn’t hesitate to exercise his ‘hard’ skills (vs 19,20). He has much to teach those of us who are in positions of leadership in church and society, as well as younger aspiring leaders.

Pray for the leaders of your church as they practise the soft skills of servant leadership and also, when appropriate, the hard skills of conviction and authority.

[Fergus MacDonald](https://www.wordlive.org/AboutWordLive/Contributors/M-P/3527733.id#.VknC1XbhCUk)

## Careful leadership

**Disciplining your mouth**

Keeping things close to your heart has good biblical precedence. Mary, the mother of Jesus, did this (see [Luke 2:19,51](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%202:19,51;&version=72;)). It is often insecurity within us that wants us to blurt out everything that we feel God is saying to us.   
  
There is a time for sharing these things, but until that time arrives, learn the discipline of silence. Learn the joy of meditation.   
  
**Doing your homework**

Before he stepped out to build, Nehemiah carefully weighed up the situation. There is something godly about this almost cautious approach (see [Proverbs 19:2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs%2019:2;&version=72;); [21:5](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs%2021:5;&version=72;)).  
  
Nehemiah:   
  
• saw for himself (vs 11–15)   
  
• carefully analysed the situation (v 17)   
  
• gave a careful account of his burden (vs 1–9,18)   
  
• gave a strong testimony of the grace of God (vs 18–20)   
  
**Dealing with the opposition**

Whenever God begins a work, the enemy seems always to be there at hand to snuff it out (see [Matthew 2:16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%202:16;&version=72;); [Revelation 12:4](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%2012:4;&version=72;)). Remember that we are in a spiritual war.   
  
Are we surprised that things get difficult when we begin to step out in the direction God has given us (see [Exodus 5:1–22](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus%205:1–22;&version=72;))? The opposition could actually be a confirmation that we are doing the right thing!   
  
Alan Hoare

# Today in the Word – 9/4/19

# Not Too Proud to Beg

**Read:** [**Psalm 6**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+6)**[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+6#fen-NIV-13987a)**]**

#### For the director of music. With stringed instruments. According to sheminith.[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+6#fen-NIV-13987b)] A psalm of David.

1Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger  
    or discipline me in your wrath.  
2Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am faint;  
    heal me, Lord, for my bones are in agony.  
3My soul is in deep anguish.  
    How long, Lord, how long?

4Turn, Lord, and deliver me;  
    save me because of your unfailing love.  
5Among the dead no one proclaims your name.  
    Who praises you from the grave?

6I am worn out from my groaning.

All night long I flood my bed with weeping  
    and drench my couch with tears.  
7My eyes grow weak with sorrow;  
    they fail because of all my foes.

8Away from me, all you who do evil,  
    for the Lord has heard my weeping.  
9The Lord has heard my cry for mercy;  
    the Lord accepts my prayer.  
10All my enemies will be overwhelmed with shame and anguish;  
    they will turn back and suddenly be put to shame.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Psalm 6:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+6#en-NIV-13987) In Hebrew texts 6:1-10 is numbered 6:2-11.
2. [Psalm 6:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+6#en-NIV-13987) Title: Probably a musical term

Navy Seals undergo a rigorous physical and mental trial appropriately named “Hell Week.” During, this week the new recruits are constantly in motion. They are required to run, swim, do sit-ups and push-ups, endure cold water, and accomplish difficult tasks, all on minimal sleep! Some are able to endure this experience only because they know the end is in sight.

The LORD has heard my cry for mercy; the Lord accepts my prayer. Psalm 6:9

David is at his breaking point in this psalm. He does not see an end in sight. “How long, Lord, how long?” he asks (v. 3). David seems to have been suffering a sickness of some sort. He laments that he is “faint” and that his “bones are in agony” (v. 2). He understands this affliction is the result of God’s punishment for his sin. He begged God not to discipline or rebuke him in His anger, not because he is innocent, but out of mercy (v. 2). David gives two reasons for God to have compassion. He asks, “Among the dead no one proclaims your name. Who praises you from the grave?” (v. 5). He reasons that God should spare his life so he can praise God. This may seem like an odd reason for David to give. However, it reveals a deep theological truth. For David, life consisted of praising the Lord. Not to praise God is in a sense not to be fully alive. David asks God to restore his health so he could return to this important calling.

Second, David paints a vivid picture of his suffering in order to arouse God’s compassion. “All night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears” (v. 6). David believes that God cares about his suffering. He ends his lament with a note of faith: “The Lord has heard my cry for mercy; the Lord accepts my prayer” (v. 9).

### Apply the Word

Do you relate to David, feeling worn out by your sorrow? If you are suffering, you may find it hard to know how to talk to God. Consider how David boldly describes to God his anguish and asks for help. Thank the Lord today that God is merciful and He cares about our suffering. We can be open and honest as we share our sorrows with Him.

### Pray with Us

Keeping MBI’s library staff in prayer, please add April Nelson, Ashley Smith, Christopher Ullman, and Donna Singley to your prayer list. Their expertise and helpful service are a blessing for the Moody community.

## BY Ryan Cook

# Our Daily Bread – 9/4/19

# Guiding Light

**Read:** [**Genesis 1:1–5**](https://www.odb.org/2019/09/04/guiding-light)

### The Beginning

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

3And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. 4God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. 5God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. [Genesis 1:3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Genesis+1%3A3)

The restaurant was lovely but dark. Only one small candle flickered on every table. To create light, diners used their smartphones to read their menus, look to their tablemates, and even to see what they were eating.

Finally, a patron quietly pushed back his chair, walked over to a waiter, and asked a simple question. “Could you turn on the lights?” Before long, a warm ceiling light flashed on and the room erupted with applause. But also with laughter. And happy chatter. And thank-yous. My friend’s husband turned off his phone, picked up his utensils, and spoke for us all. “Let there be light! Now, let’s eat!”

Our gloomy evening turned festive with the flick of a switch. But how much more important to know the real source of true light. God Himself spoke those astonishing words, “Let there be light,” on the first day when He created the universe, “and there was light” (Genesis 1:3). Then “God saw that the light was good” (v. 4).

Light expresses God’s great love for us. His light points us to Jesus, “the light of the world” (John 8:12), who guides us from the gloom of sin. Walking in His light, we find the bright path to a life that glorifies the Son. He is the world’s brightest gift. As He shines, may we walk His way.

By:  [Patricia Raybon](https://odb.org/author/patriciaraybon/)

#### Reflect & Pray

In what situation do you need Christ’s light to shine? When has His light guided you?

Loving God, we thank You for Jesus, the Light of the World, and the guiding light of His great love.

#### Insight

One of the fascinating characteristics of Scripture is how different portions of the Bible echo one another—ultimately combining to tell the story of Jesus. We see this synergy when we compare today’s reading, Genesis 1:1–5, to John 1:1–5. Both begin with the phrase “in the beginning,” taking us back before time to see the work of God in creation. In the beginning, God existed (Genesis 1:1), and the Word (Jesus; John 1:1, 14) existed with the Father and the Spirit (Genesis 1:2). As Genesis 1 tracks the work of the Godhead in creation, John affirms that Christ was the primary agent of that creation (John 1:3). Both accounts resolve with light penetrating the darkness of the pre-creation void. Initially, that light was through the declared word of the Father (Genesis 1:3), a reality that anticipated the eventual coming of Jesus—the Light of the world (John 1:4–5; 8:12; 9:5).

# God Calling – 9/4/19

# Drop Those Burdens

**Our God is our supply.**

Look to Me for all ... Rely on Me for all.  Drop those burdens, and then, singing and free, you can go on your way rejoicing. Encumbered with them you will fall.

Drop them at My Feet, knowing surely that I will lift them and deal with each one as is truly best.

When he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he ... blessed, and brake the loaves ... and they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.  Mark 6:41-44

# My Utmost for His Highest – 9/5/19

# Watching With Jesus

Stay here and watch with Me. — **Read:** [**Matthew 26:38**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Matthew+26%3A38)

“Watch with Me.” Jesus was saying, in effect, “Watch with no private point of view at all, but watch solely and entirely with Me.” In the early stages of our Christian life, we do not watch with Jesus, we watch for Him. We do not watch with Him through the revealed truth of the Bible even in the circumstances of our own lives. Our Lord is trying to introduce us to identification with Himself through a particular “Gethsemane” experience of our own. But we refuse to go, saying, “No, Lord, I can’t see the meaning of this, and besides, it’s very painful.” And how can we possibly watch with Someone who is so incomprehensible? How are we going to understand Jesus sufficiently to watch with Him in His Gethsemane, when we don’t even know why He is suffering? We don’t know how to watch with Him— we are only used to the idea of Jesus watching with us.

The disciples loved Jesus Christ to the limit of their natural capacity, but they did not fully understand His purpose. In the Garden of Gethsemane they slept as a result of their own sorrow, and at the end of three years of the closest and most intimate relationship of their lives they “all…forsook Him and fled” ([Matthew 26:56](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+26:56)).

“They were all filled with the Holy Spirit…” ([Acts 2:4](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+2:4)). “They” refers to the same people, but something wonderful has happened between these two events— our Lord’s death, resurrection, and ascension— and the disciples have now been invaded and “filled with the Holy Spirit.” Our Lord had said, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you…” ([Acts 1:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+1:8)). This meant that they learned to watch with Him the rest of their lives.

**WISDOM FROM OSWALD CHAMBERS**

We never enter into the Kingdom of God by having our head questions answered, but only by commitment. [The Highest Good—Thy Great Redemption](http://www.dhp.org/Products/Quotable-Oswald-Chambers--The__BW382.aspx?affid=RBCHAMB)

# CCEL – 9/5/19

**As the body is one, and hath many members, . . . so also is Christ.**—[I COR. 12:12.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.12.html" \l "iCor.12.12)

He is the head of the body, the church.—The head over things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.—We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

A body hast thou prepared me.—Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

Thine they were, and thou gavest them me.—He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.—Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.

Grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth . . . maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

[Col. 1:18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Col.1.html" \l "Col.1.18). -[Eph. 1:22,23](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.1.html" \l "Eph.1.22). -[Eph. 5:30](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.5.html" \l "Eph.5.30).[Heb. 10:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.10.html" \l "Heb.10.5). -[Psa. 139:16](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.139.html" \l "Ps.139.16).[John 17:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.17.html" \l "John.17.6). -[Eph. 1:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.1.html" \l "Eph.1.4). -[Rom. 8:29](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.8.html" \l "Rom.8.29).[Eph. 4:15,16](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.4.html" \l "Eph.4.15).

“Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar.” **[Psalm 120:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.120.html" \l "Ps.120.5)**

As a Christian you have to live in the midst of an ungodly world, and it is of little use for you to cry “Woe is me.” Jesus did not pray that you should be taken out of the world, and what he did not pray for, you need not desire. Better far in the Lord’s strength to meet the difficulty, and glorify him in it. The enemy is ever on the watch to detect inconsistency in your conduct; be therefore very holy. Remember that the eyes of all are upon you, and that more is expected from you than from other men. Strive to give no occasion for blame. Let your goodness be the only fault they can discover in you. Like Daniel, compel them to say of you, “We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.” Seek to be useful as well as consistent. Perhaps you think, “If I were in a more favourable position I might serve the Lord’s cause, but I cannot do any good where I am”; but the worse the people are among whom you live, the more need have they of your exertions; if they be crooked, the more necessity that you should set them straight; and if they be perverse, the more need have you to turn their proud hearts to the truth. Where should the physician be but where there are many sick? Where is honour to be won by the soldier but in the hottest fire of the battle? And when weary of the strife and sin that meets you on every hand, consider that all the saints have endured the same trial. They were not carried on beds of down to heaven, and you must not expect to travel more easily than they. They had to hazard their lives unto the death in the high places of the field, and you will not be crowned till you also have endured hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Therefore, “stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.”

# Word Live – 9/5/19

# Opposition, prayer, work

## Prepare

‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory’ ([Isaiah 6:3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+6%3A3&version=NIV)).



## Bible passage: Nehemiah 4:1–23

#### Nehemiah 4

##### Opposition to the Rebuilding

1 When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews, 2 and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, "What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble—burned as they are?"

3 Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, "What they are building—if even a fox climbed up on it, he would break down their wall of stones!"

4 Hear us, O our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. 5 Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders.

6 So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.

7 But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the men of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem's walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry. 8 They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it. 9 But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.

10 Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, "The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall."

11 Also our enemies said, "Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work."

12 Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, "Wherever you turn, they will attack us."

13 Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears and bows. 14 After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes."

15 When our enemies heard that we were aware of their plot and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to his own work.

16 From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor. The officers posted themselves behind all the people of Judah 17 who were building the wall. Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, 18 and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. But the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me.

19 Then I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "The work is extensive and spread out, and we are widely separated from each other along the wall. 20 Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God will fight for us!"

21 So we continued the work with half the men holding spears, from the first light of dawn till the stars came out. 22 At that time I also said to the people, "Have every man and his helper stay inside Jerusalem at night, so they can serve us as guards by night and workmen by day." 23 Neither I nor my brothers nor my men nor the guards with me took off our clothes; each had his weapon, even when he went for water.

## Explore

**Faith and action**

When we set out on an exciting mission for God, be it rebuilding a city or witnessing to our friends, we often start with great boldness. All too often, though, we can get discouraged at the first hint of opposition. If we don’t handle that well, the problems build and we are quickly overwhelmed. Nehemiah gives us a wonderful model of how to face such opposition: with faith and action.

**Not taking it personally**

First, he didn’t take the insults and discouragements personally – he saw clearly that Sanballat and Tobiah were opposing the Lord and the task he had started. In a later chapter we will see Nehemiah engaging with his accusers, but for now he simply handed the responsibility of dealing with them back to God.

**Practical measures**

With the root problem safely in the Lord’s hands, he then instigated practical measures to give the people confidence and to prepare wisely to meet the threat.

**Press on**

Our opponents may not be people sending us death threats, they are more often our spiritual enemy whispering doubts and fears into our hearts. Nehemiah’s advice remains the same: ‘Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome’ (v 14), then press on in the strength he will give you.

[Jennie Pollock](https://www.wordlive.org/AboutWordLive/Contributors/M-P/3527733.id#.VknC1XbhCUk)

## Respond

What discouragements are you facing today? Hand them back to our ‘great and awesome’ God, and ask him for the courage and strength you need to do his will.

## Deeper Bible study

In the Western world, Christians are increasingly under verbal attack from non-believers. In some UK universities, Christian groups advocating a pro-life stance or promoting biblical ethical positions face restrictions and harassment. This resembles the crisis confronting Nehemiah in today’s reading. Sanballat, as governor of Samaria to the north, no doubt assumed nearby Jerusalem to be part of his fiefdom. From the initiation of the rebuilding project, he and Tobiah, his high-ranking associate, instigate a campaign of ridicule and misinformation against Nehemiah and his helpers ([Neh 2:19](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Neh+2%3A19&version=NIV)). Now that the wall is half its full height, verbal abuse gives way to violent threats. Intimidation is reinforced by other political entities surrounding Jerusalem: the Ammonites from the east, the Arabs from the south and the Ashdodites from the west (vs 7,8).

Nehemiah’s first response is prayer (vs 4,5): he calls on God to curse his enemies. This contrasts sharply with Jesus’ teaching and example ([Matt 5:43–48; Luke 23:34](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt+5%3A43%E2%80%9348%3B+Luke+23%3A34+&version=NIV)), but it is unfair to apply the standards of the Sermon on the Mount here. ‘Understood from Nehemiah’s point of view, the prayer simply calls upon God, in language sanctioned by the conventions of the day, after extreme provocation, to deal justly with those who have aligned themselves against the divine purpose.’1 We Christians are, indeed, to pray for our adversaries, but Nehemiah reminds us that there is a case also for praying against the spiritual forces motivating our enemies and the schemes they devise (see [Eph 6:12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Eph+6%3A12&version=NIV)).

We dare not forget that God’s church is engaged in spiritual warfare. All our attackers are in servitude to unseen evil forces. Our priority is to pray for visible enemies and against those who are invisible.

Reacquaint yourself with the Christian armoury in Ephesians 6. Consciously rearm yourself by putting on each piece: belt, breastplate, shoes, helmet and sword.

1 Throntveit, Ezra–Nehemiah, John Knox Press, 2012 p 81

[Fergus MacDonald](https://www.wordlive.org/AboutWordLive/Contributors/M-P/3527733.id#.VknC1XbhCUk)

# Today in the Word – 9/5/19

# God of Justice

**Read:** [**Psalm 7**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+7)**[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+7#fen-NIV-13997a)**]**

#### A shiggaion[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+7#fen-NIV-13997b)] of David, which he sang to the Lord concerning Cush, a Benjamite.

1Lord my God, I take refuge in you;  
    save and deliver me from all who pursue me,  
2or they will tear me apart like a lion  
    and rip me to pieces with no one to rescue me.

3Lord my God, if I have done this  
    and there is guilt on my hands—  
4if I have repaid my ally with evil  
    or without cause have robbed my foe—  
5then let my enemy pursue and overtake me;  
    let him trample my life to the ground  
    and make me sleep in the dust.[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+7#fen-NIV-14001c)]

6Arise, Lord, in your anger;  
    rise up against the rage of my enemies.  
    Awake, my God; decree justice.  
7Let the assembled peoples gather around you,  
    while you sit enthroned over them on high.  
8    Let the Lord judge the peoples.  
Vindicate me, Lord, according to my righteousness,  
    according to my integrity, O Most High.  
9Bring to an end the violence of the wicked  
    and make the righteous secure—  
you, the righteous God  
    who probes minds and hearts.

10My shield[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+7#fen-NIV-14006d)] is God Most High,  
    who saves the upright in heart.  
11God is a righteous judge,  
    a God who displays his wrath every day.  
12If he does not relent,  
    he[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+7#fen-NIV-14008e)] will sharpen his sword;  
    he will bend and string his bow.  
13He has prepared his deadly weapons;  
    he makes ready his flaming arrows.

14Whoever is pregnant with evil  
    conceives trouble and gives birth to disillusionment.  
15Whoever digs a hole and scoops it out  
    falls into the pit they have made.  
16The trouble they cause recoils on them;  
    their violence comes down on their own heads.

17I will give thanks to the Lord because of his righteousness;  
    I will sing the praises of the name of the Lord Most High.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Psalm 7:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+7#en-NIV-13997) In Hebrew texts 7:1-17 is numbered 7:2-18.
2. [Psalm 7:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+7#en-NIV-13997) Title: Probably a literary or musical term
3. [Psalm 7:5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+7#en-NIV-14001) The Hebrew has Selah (a word of uncertain meaning) here.
4. [Psalm 7:10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+7#en-NIV-14006) Or sovereign
5. [Psalm 7:12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+7#en-NIV-14008) Or If anyone does not repent, / God

Seventeen-year-old Shareef Cousin found himself the youngest person in the United States on death row. Shareef had been convicted of murder even though he had what seemed like an airtight alibi. Afterward it was determined that the detective on the case lied to obtain an arrest warrant. The only actual eyewitness to the crime had mistakenly identified Shareef as guilty. Shareef served four years in prison before the verdict was overturned, and he was set free.

My shield is God Most High, who saves the upright in heart. Psalm 7:10

In this psalm, David laments that a certain Cush had falsely accused him of crimes. We do not know any specifics about this situation from the Bible, but based on this psalm it is clear that David was being accused of betraying a friend and of robbery (v. 4). This puts David in a precarious position. He describes his accuser as a lion who wanted to “rip me to pieces” (v. 2). In this stressful situation, David pleads for God’s help.

David appealed to God’s justice. He knew that God is perfectly righteous and that no secret was hidden from Him. God is able to probe the “minds and hearts” of any person (v. 9). David asked God to be true to His character and vindicate him from the injustice and rage of his enemies (v. 6). David put his hope in God as his “shield” and protector (v. 10).

David also expressed his trust in the moral structure of the world God created. He proclaimed, “Whoever is pregnant with evil conceives trouble and gives birth to disillusionment. Whoever digs a hole and scoops it out falls into the pit they have made” (vv. 14–15). David knew that, in general, we reap what we sow. Because of this, he gives thanks to the Lord and says he will “sing the praises of the name of the Lord Most High” (v. 17), even while facing injustice.

### Apply the Word

It may seem like the wicked get away with their crimes. How- ever, as David proclaimed, we know our God is just. One day every person will face the final judgment before God. This is cause for us to thank the Lord for the salvation he has achieved for us in Christ. It also assures us that God cares about justice and will act to right all wrongs.

### Pray with Us

As today’s devotional encourages, let’s thank the Lord of justice and mercy for His salvation extended to all who call on His name. May we remember, even when facing life’s wrongs, that God’s justice will be ultimately achieved!

## BY Ryan Cook

# Our Daily Bread – 9/5/19

# The Last Word

 **Read:** [**1 Corinthians 15:12–19**](https://www.odb.org/2019/09/05/the-last-word-3)

### The Resurrection of the Dead

12But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. 15More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. 16For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. 17And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. 18Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. 19If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. [1 Corinthians 15:19](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=1+Corinthians+15%3A19)

Her name was Saralyn, and I sort of had a crush on her back in our school days. She had the most wonderful laugh. I’m not sure whether she knew about my crush, but I suspect she did. After graduation I lost track of her. Our lives went in different directions as lives often do.

I keep up with my graduating class in some online forums, and I was intensely sad when I heard that Saralyn died. I found myself wondering about the direction her life had taken over the years. This is happening more and more the older I grow, this experience of losing friends and family. But many of us tend to avoid talking about it.

While we still sorrow, the hope the apostle Paul talks about is that death doesn’t have the final say (1 Corinthians 15:54–55). There is something that follows, another word: resurrection. Paul grounds that hope in the reality of the resurrection of Christ (v. 12), and says “if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith” (v. 14). If our hope as believers is limited to this world only, that’s just a pity (v. 19).

We will one day see those again who have “fallen asleep in Christ” (v. 18)—grandparents and parents, friends and neighbors, or perhaps even old schoolyard crushes.

Death doesn’t get the last word. Resurrection does.

By:  [John Blase](https://odb.org/author/johnblase/)

#### Reflect & Pray

What does Christ’s resurrection mean to you? How might you express your faith and point someone to the hope of the resurrection?

Jesus, may the power of Your resurrection become more and more evident in my life. May it be clear in my words and actions, especially as I interact with those who do not know You.

#### Insight

Paul’s preaching and that of others in the New Testament about the resurrection of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:12) was rooted in Old Testament Scriptures (vv. 3–4). Their preaching followed the example of Jesus who also referred to these Scriptures to enlighten His perplexed disciples about His resurrection. He said, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms. . . . This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day” (Luke 24:44–46). Peter spoke of Christ’s resurrection in Acts 2:23–28 and quoted from Psalm 16:8–11 to show that this was predicted by David. Then Peter quotes Psalm 110:1 to show that David also predicted Christ’s ascension and exaltation (Acts 2:34–36).

# God Calling – 9/5/19

# Progress

Progress is the Law of Heaven. Higher, ever higher, rise to Life and Beauty, Knowledge and Power. Higher and higher.

Tomorrow be stronger, braver, more loving than you have been today.

The Law of Progress gives a meaning, a purpose to life.

And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.  Romans 12:2

# My Utmost for His Highest – 9/6/19

# The Far-Reaching Rivers of Life

He who believes in Me…out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. —[John 7:38](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+7%3A38)

A river reaches places which its source never knows. And Jesus said that, if we have received His fullness, “rivers of living water” will flow out of us, reaching in blessing even “to the end of the earth” ([Acts 1:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+1:8)) regardless of how small the visible effects of our lives may appear to be. We have nothing to do with the outflow— “This is the work of God, that you believe…” ([John 6:29](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+6:29)). God rarely allows a person to see how great a blessing he is to others.

A river is victoriously persistent, overcoming all barriers. For a while it goes steadily on its course, but then comes to an obstacle. And for a while it is blocked, yet it soon makes a pathway around the obstacle. Or a river will drop out of sight for miles, only later to emerge again even broader and greater than ever. Do you see God using the lives of others, but an obstacle has come into your life and you do not seem to be of any use to God? Then keep paying attention to the Source, and God will either take you around the obstacle or remove it. The river of the Spirit of God overcomes all obstacles. Never focus your eyes on the obstacle or the difficulty. The obstacle will be a matter of total indifference to the river that will flow steadily through you if you will simply remember to stay focused on the Source. Never allow anything to come between you and Jesus Christ— not emotion nor experience— nothing must keep you from the one great sovereign Source.

Think of the healing and far-reaching rivers developing and nourishing themselves in our souls! God has been opening up wonderful truths to our minds, and every point He has opened up is another indication of the wider power of the river that He will flow through us. If you believe in Jesus, you will find that God has developed and nourished in you mighty, rushing rivers of blessing for others.

**WISDOM FROM OSWALD CHAMBERS**

The remarkable thing about fearing God is that when you fear God you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God you fear everything else. “Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord”;…  The Highest Good—The Pilgrim’s Song Book, 537 L

# CCEL – 9/6/19

**Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens.**—[LAM. 3:41.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Lam.3.html" \l "Lam.3.41)

Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!—Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.—I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land. Hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit. Cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee.

Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name.—Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.

Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do.

[Psa. 113:5,6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.113.html" \l "Ps.113.5). -[Psa. 25:1](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.25.html" \l "Ps.25.1). -[Psa. 143:6-8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.143.html" \l "Ps.143.6).[Psa. 63:3,4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.63.html" \l "Ps.63.3). -[Psa. 86:4.5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.86.html" \l "Ps.86.4).[John 14:13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.14.html" \l "John.14.13).

“In the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.” **[Philippians 2:15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.2.html" \l "Phil.2.15)**

We use lights to make manifest. A Christian man should so shine in his life, that a person could not live with him a week without knowing the gospel. His conversation should be such that all who are about him should clearly perceive whose he is, and whom he serves; and should see the image of Jesus reflected in his daily actions. Lights are intended for guidance. We are to help those around us who are in the dark. We are to hold forth to them the Word of life. We are to point sinners to the Saviour, and the weary to a divine resting-place. Men sometimes read their Bibles, and fail to understand them; we should be ready, like Philip, to instruct the inquirer in the meaning of God’s Word, the way of salvation, and the life of godliness. Lights are also used for warning. On our rocks and shoals a light-house is sure to be erected. Christian men should know that there are many false lights shown everywhere in the world, and therefore the right light is needed. The wreckers of Satan are always abroad, tempting the ungodly to sin under the name of pleasure; they hoist the wrong light, be it ours to put up the true light upon every dangerous rock, to point out every sin, and tell what it leads to, that so we may be clear of the blood of all men, shining as lights in the world. Lights also have a very cheering influence, and so have Christians. A Christian ought to be a comforter, with kind words on his lips, and sympathy in his heart; he should carry sunshine wherever he goes, and diffuse happiness around him.

Gracious Spirit dwell with me;

I myself would gracious be,

And with words that help and heal

Would thy life in mine reveal,

And with actions bold and meek

Would for Christ my Saviour speak.

# Word Live – 9/6/19

# What really matters

## Prepare

‘Lord, I’m here because I want to know you better and love you more. Please reveal more of yourself to me today. Amen.’



## Bible passage: Nehemiah 5:1–19

##### Nehemiah Helps the Poor

1 Now the men and their wives raised a great outcry against their Jewish brothers. 2 Some were saying, "We and our sons and daughters are numerous; in order for us to eat and stay alive, we must get grain."

3 Others were saying, "We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our homes to get grain during the famine."

4 Still others were saying, "We have had to borrow money to pay the king's tax on our fields and vineyards. 5 Although we are of the same flesh and blood as our countrymen and though our sons are as good as theirs, yet we have to subject our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but we are powerless, because our fields and our vineyards belong to others."

6 When I heard their outcry and these charges, I was very angry. 7 I pondered them in my mind and then accused the nobles and officials. I told them, "You are exacting usury from your own countrymen!" So I called together a large meeting to deal with them 8 and said: "As far as possible, we have bought back our Jewish brothers who were sold to the Gentiles. Now you are selling your brothers, only for them to be sold back to us!" They kept quiet, because they could find nothing to say.

9 So I continued, "What you are doing is not right. Shouldn't you walk in the fear of our God to avoid the reproach of our Gentile enemies? 10 I and my brothers and my men are also lending the people money and grain. But let the exacting of usury stop! 11 Give back to them immediately their fields, vineyards, olive groves and houses, and also the usury you are charging them—the hundredth part of the money, grain, new wine and oil."

12 "We will give it back," they said. "And we will not demand anything more from them. We will do as you say."   
      Then I summoned the priests and made the nobles and officials take an oath to do what they had promised. 13 I also shook out the folds of my robe and said, "In this way may God shake out of his house and possessions every man who does not keep this promise. So may such a man be shaken out and emptied!"   
      At this the whole assembly said, "Amen," and praised the LORD. And the people did as they had promised.

14 Moreover, from the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, until his thirty-second year—twelve years—neither I nor my brothers ate the food allotted to the governor. 15 But the earlier governors—those preceding me—placed a heavy burden on the people and took forty shekels of silver from them in addition to food and wine. Their assistants also lorded it over the people. But out of reverence for God I did not act like that. 16 Instead, I devoted myself to the work on this wall. All my men were assembled there for the work; we did not acquire any land.

17 Furthermore, a hundred and fifty Jews and officials ate at my table, as well as those who came to us from the surrounding nations. 18 Each day one ox, six choice sheep and some poultry were prepared for me, and every ten days an abundant supply of wine of all kinds. In spite of all this, I never demanded the food allotted to the governor, because the demands were heavy on these people.

19 Remember me with favor, O my God, for all I have done for these people.

## Explore

**Internal problems**

The walls were coming on beautifully. Nehemiah and the people were working hard and ready to face any external attack. But then Nehemiah learned that the problems weren’t only outside the walls – they were inside, too.

**Exploiting one another**

When he heard how the Jews were abusing and exploiting one another he knew he had to act. There was no point protecting them from outsiders only for them to destroy one another in their homes.

**Living godly lives**

The Christian faith is not just about saving souls from the enemy, but about living godly lives. If we call ourselves Christians but exploit and abuse our neighbours, we make a mockery of our testimony that we are new creations and that we have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us. In our globalised world our neighbours are rarely only those living in our town or neighbourhood. We can place huge burdens on the backs of total strangers across the world, for example, by giving our custom to companies that exploit their workers or avoid paying taxes.

**Spiritual cost**

Just as in Nehemiah’s day, living justly can be financially costly, but in the long run, living unjustly – exploiting the poor for our own benefit – has a far greater spiritual cost.

[Jennie Pollock](https://www.wordlive.org/AboutWordLive/Contributors/M-P/3527733.id#.VknC1XbhCUk)

## Respond

Ask God to convict you of any areas where you are turning a blind eye to injustice, or acting in ways that are privileging your comfort over the needs of others.

## Deeper Bible study

The shame of poverty and injustice in today’s world is mirrored in microcosm in today’s reading. Nehemiah’s firm action in dealing with this issue provides a precedent that modern government leaders might do well to follow. The ‘great outcry’ of verse 1 is triggered by an unintended outcome of the rebuilding project. Those working on the wall had left their normal crafts, fields and vineyards for two months. By doing this during a famine (v 3) it created a crisis for them and their families. To have enough money to buy grain, they are forced to mortgage their property and their children to local nobles and officials.

Nehemiah’s response to the emergency models ways in which we might react to today’s debt and poverty crisis in the majority world. His actions prompt some serious questions for us. Does the suffering of our fellow human beings outrage us (see v 6)? Do we get angry when we see TV footage of the poor being exploited? Do we take time to reflect seriously on issues of global injustice in the light of biblical values (see v 7a)? Do we attempt, via internet petitions and other means, to call to account vested interests that are making their shareholders rich at the expense of the poor (see v 7b)? Are we committed travellers on the journey to end extreme poverty?

Making and maintaining a full-hearted commitment to social justice is to walk in the fear of God (v 9). By doing so we might also challenge the perception of four in ten non-Christians in the UK who don’t know whether the church is making a positive difference in the world (see v 9).1 Nehemiah means business (v 10). Do we?

‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ ([Matt 25:40](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt+25%3A40&version=NIV))

1 The UK Church In Action, Barna Group, May 2018

[Fergus MacDonald](https://www.wordlive.org/AboutWordLive/Contributors/M-P/3527733.id#.VknC1XbhCUk)

## Good leadership

**Speaking up for the poor**

When Nehemiah realised what was going on, he did not feel that this was too trivial a matter for him to get involved in. After weighing it all up, he spoke out on behalf of the poor.   
  
He felt deep anger – the anger of God. When we see exploitation going on, we too must pick up on the heart of God and speak out. Their suffering must become our suffering (see [1 Corinthians 12:26](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%2012:26;&version=72;)).  
  
**Setting an example for others**

The way Nehemiah ran his house went right against the grain of his predecessors. We learn from him that:  
  
• Good leaders are not dictated to by the behaviour and attitudes of others.  
   
• Good leaders teach more by what they do than by what they say.   
  
• Good leaders must never exploit, but rather be examples of care and consideration.   
  
**Serving in the fear of the Lord**

Nehemiah served as he did because he understood the fear of the Lord. It is good to remember that God sees all that we do and say.   
  
Nehemiah also cared for the people. He did not want to add to their heavy burdens. He financed his house out of his own pocket (v 18; see [1 Thessalonians 2:9](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Thessalonians%202:9;&version=72;)).   
  
Alan Hoare

# Today in the Word – 9/6/19

# God of Wonders

### Read: [Psalm 8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+8)[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+8#fen-NIV-14014a)]

#### For the director of music. According to gittith.[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+8#fen-NIV-14014b)] A psalm of David.

1Lord, our Lord,  
    how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory  
    in the heavens.  
2Through the praise of children and infants  
    you have established a stronghold against your enemies,  
    to silence the foe and the avenger.  
3When I consider your heavens,  
    the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars,  
    which you have set in place,  
4what is mankind that you are mindful of them,  
    human beings that you care for them?[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+8#fen-NIV-14017c)]

5You have made them[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+8#fen-NIV-14018d)] a little lower than the angels[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+8#fen-NIV-14018e)]  
    and crowned them[[f](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+8#fen-NIV-14018f)] with glory and honor.  
6You made them rulers over the works of your hands;  
    you put everything under their[[g](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+8#fen-NIV-14019g)] feet:  
7all flocks and herds,  
    and the animals of the wild,  
8the birds in the sky,  
    and the fish in the sea,  
    all that swim the paths of the seas.

9Lord, our Lord,  
    how majestic is your name in all the earth!

#### Footnotes:

1. [Psalm 8:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+8#en-NIV-14014) In Hebrew texts 8:1-9 is numbered 8:2-10.
2. [Psalm 8:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+8#en-NIV-14014) Title: Probably a musical term
3. [Psalm 8:4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+8#en-NIV-14017) Or what is a human being that you are mindful of him, / a son of man that you care for him?
4. [Psalm 8:5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+8#en-NIV-14018) Or him
5. [Psalm 8:5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+8#en-NIV-14018) Or than God
6. [Psalm 8:5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+8#en-NIV-14018) Or him
7. [Psalm 8:6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+8#en-NIV-14019) Or made him ruler . . . ; / . . . his

In 2009, Susan Boyle achieved international fame for her audition on Britain’s Got Talent. She did not seem like the usual contestant. She was forty-seven years old and unemployed, and no one expected much from her—until she began to sing. Her brilliant rendition of “I Dreamed a Dream” became the most watched video on YouTube that year, and Susan went on to sell millions of albums.

LORD, our LORD, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens. Psalm 8:1

When we encounter the unexpected, we respond with a sense of wonder. In Psalm 8, David praises God, not for His power or might, but for how He often uses the people we least expect. In verse 2 David proclaims, “Through the praise of children and infants, you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.” In the ancient world with high infant mortality rates, babies were a symbol of powerlessness and fragility. So, David glorifies God because He uses the praise of the most insignificant, weak, and needy people in society to silence His enemies. God is shown to be majestic because of how He chooses the weak to silence the strong.

God has always enjoyed working in this way. In verses 3 and 4, David reflects on how vast the created universe was and how God put all of these wonders under the care and authority of humans. How small we seem compared to elephants or supernovas! Yet, “you made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet” (v. 6).

This theme of God showing His strength in weakness comes to its ultimate fulfillment on the Cross. When Jesus was at His weakest point, beaten and mocked and hanging on a Roman cross, he was actually accomplishing the most. In His death, He defeated His enemies: the power of sin and Satan and death.

### Apply the Word

Have you ever felt too weak or insignificant to be used by God? One of God’s most amazing qualities is that He delights in using the people we would least expect. The Apostle Paul put it this way, “But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong” (1 Cor. 1:27).

### Pray with Us

Moody Publishers is an outstanding ministry, reaching thousands of readers with the truth of the Bible. Paul Santhouse, vice president of Moody Publishers, welcomes your prayers for his teams and their work for the kingdom.

## BY Ryan Cook

# Our Daily Bread – 9/6/19

# I Will

 **Read:** [**Leviticus 19:9–18**](https://www.odb.org/2019/09/06/i-will-2)

9“‘When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. 10Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the Lord your God.

11“‘Do not steal.

“‘Do not lie.

“‘Do not deceive one another.

12“‘Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the Lord.

13“‘Do not defraud or rob your neighbor.

“‘Do not hold back the wages of a hired worker overnight.

14“‘Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the Lord.

15“‘Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly.

16“‘Do not go about spreading slander among your people.

“‘Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor’s life. I am the Lord.

17“‘Do not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in their guilt.

18“‘Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.

Love your neighbor as yourself. [Leviticus 19:18](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Leviticus+19%3A18)

Shirley settled into her recliner after a long day. She looked out the window and noticed an older couple struggling to move a section of old fence left in a yard and labeled “free.” Shirley grabbed her husband, and they headed out the door to help. The four of them wrestled the fence onto a dolly and pushed it up the city street and around the corner to the couple’s home—laughing all the way at the spectacle they must be. As they returned to get a second section of fence, the woman asked Shirley, “You be my friend?” “Yes, I will,” she replied. Shirley later learned that her new Vietnamese friend knew little English and was lonely because her grown children had moved hours away.

In Leviticus, God reminded the Israelites that they knew how it felt to be strangers (19:34) and how to treat others (vv. 9–18). God had set them apart to be His own nation, and in return they were to bless their “neighbors” by loving them as themselves. Jesus, the greatest blessing from God to the nations, later restated His Father’s words and extended them to us all: “Love the Lord your God . . . . Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37–39).

Through Christ’s Spirit living in us, we can love God and others because He loved us first (Galatians 5:22–23; 1 John 4:19). Can we say with Shirley, “Yes, I will”?

By:  [Anne Cetas](https://odb.org/author/annecetas/)

#### Reflect & Pray

How have you been cared for by someone when you felt alone? Who can you reach out to this week to show the love of Jesus?

Loving God, thank You for the love You’ve shown me. Please, Holy Spirit, love others through me so that You might be glorified.

#### Insight

The command to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18) is found in a chapter containing a variety of rules for godly living that many scholars consider a counterpart of the Ten Commandments. Leviticus 19:18, like the tenth commandment (Exodus 20:17), is about responsibility toward one’s neighbor. But it goes a step further by saying our care for others includes love, which extends not only to members of the believing community but also to “foreigners” (Leviticus 19:34). Jesus quoted this golden rule as an extension of our love for God: “The most important [commandment] . . . [is to] love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’ ” (Mark 12:29–31).

# God Calling – 9/6/19

# Your Loved Ones

Your loved ones are very safe in My Keeping. Learning and loving and working, theirs is a life of happiness and progress.  They live to serve, and serve they truly do. They serve Me and those they love. Ceaselessly they serve.

But their ministrations, so many, so diverse, you see no more than those in my time on earth in human form could have seen the angels who ministered unto Me in the wilderness.

How often mortals rush to earthly friends who can serve them in so limited a way, when the friends who are freed from the limitations of humanity can serve them so much better, understand them better, protect better, plan better, and even plead better their cause with Me.

You do well to remember your friends in the Unseen. Companying with them the more you live in this Unseen World the gentler will be your passing when it comes. Earth's troubles and difficulties will seem, even now, less overwhelming as you look, not at the things that are seen but at the real, the Eternal Life.

"And this is Life Eternal that we may know Thee, the Only True God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent."

Learning to know Me draws that Kingdom very near, and in Me, and through Knowledge of Me, the dear ones there become very near and dear.

And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. Acts 16:31

# My Utmost for His Highest – 9/7/19

# Fountains of Blessings

The water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life. —[John 4:14](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+4%3A14)

The picture our Lord described here is not that of a simple stream of water, but an overflowing fountain. Continue to “be filled” ([Ephesians 5:18](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+5:18)) and the sweetness of your vital relationship to Jesus will flow as generously out of you as it has been given to you. If you find that His life is not springing up as it should, you are to blame— something is obstructing the flow. Was Jesus saying to stay focused on the Source so that you may be blessed personally? No, you are to focus on the Source so that out of you “will flow rivers of living water”— irrepressible life ([John 7:38](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+7:38)).

We are to be fountains through which Jesus can flow as “rivers of living water” in blessing to everyone. Yet some of us are like the Dead Sea, always receiving but never giving, because our relationship is not right with the Lord Jesus. As surely as we receive blessings from Him, He will pour out blessings through us. But whenever the blessings are not being poured out in the same measure they are received, there is a defect in our relationship with Him. Is there anything between you and Jesus Christ? Is there anything hindering your faith in Him? If not, then Jesus says that out of you “will flow rivers of living water.” It is not a blessing that you pass on, or an experience that you share with others, but a river that continually flows through you. Stay at the Source, closely guarding your faith in Jesus Christ and your relationship to Him, and there will be a steady flow into the lives of others with no dryness or deadness whatsoever.

Is it excessive to say that rivers will flow out of one individual believer? Do you look at yourself and say, “But I don’t see the rivers”? Through the history of God’s work you will usually find that He has started with the obscure, the unknown, the ignored, but those who have been steadfastly true to Jesus Christ.

**WISDOM FROM OSWALD CHAMBERS**

The great point of Abraham’s faith in God was that he was prepared to do anything for God.  Not Knowing Whither, 903 R

# CCEL – 9/7/19

**Rejoicing in hope.**—[ROM. 12:12.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.12.html" \l "Rom.12.12)

The hope which is laid up for you in heaven.—If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.—We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.—Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me cannot be my disciple.—No man should be moved by these afflictions, for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.

Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.—The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.—Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.—Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.—By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

[Col. 1:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Col.1.html" \l "Col.1.5). -[I Cor. 15:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.15.html" \l "iCor.15.19). -[Acts. 14:22](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Acts.14.html" \l "Acts.14.22). -[Luke 14:27](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Luke.14.html" \l "Luke.14.27). -[I Thes. 3:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iThess.3.html" \l "iThess.3.3).[Phi. 4:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.4.html" \l "Phil.4.4). -[Rom. 15:13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.15.html" \l "Rom.15.13). -[I Pet. 1:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.1.html" \l "iPet.1.3). -[I Pet. 1:8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.1.html" \l "iPet.1.8). -[Rom. 5:2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.5.html" \l "Rom.5.2).

“And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.” **[Mark 2:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Mark.2.html" \l "Mark.2.4)**

Faith is full of inventions. The house was full, a crowd blocked up the door, but faith found a way of getting at the Lord and placing the palsied man before him. If we cannot get sinners where Jesus is by ordinary methods we must use extraordinary ones. It seems, according to [Luke 5:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Luke.5.html" \l "Luke.5.19), that a tiling had to be removed, which would make dust and cause a measure of danger to those below, but where the case is very urgent we must not mind running some risks and shocking some proprieties. Jesus was there to heal, and therefore fall what might, faith ventured all so that her poor paralysed charge might have his sins forgiven. O that we had more daring faith among us! Cannot we, dear reader, seek it this morning for ourselves and for our fellow-workers, and will we not try today to perform some gallant act for the love of souls and the glory of the Lord.

The world is constantly inventing; genius serves all the purposes of human desire: cannot faith invent too, and reach by some new means the outcasts who lie perishing around us? It was the presence of Jesus which excited victorious courage in the four bearers of the palsied man: is not the Lord among us now? Have we seen his face for ourselves this morning? Have we felt his healing power in our own souls? If so, then through door, through window, or through roof, let us, breaking through all impediments, labour to bring poor souls to Jesus. All means are good and decorous when faith and love are truly set on winning souls. If hunger for bread can break through stone walls, surely hunger for souls is not to be hindered in its efforts. O Lord, make us quick to suggest methods of reaching thy poor sin-sick ones, and bold to carry them out at all hazards.

# Word Live – 9/7/19

# Blessed assurance

## Prepare

[Hebrews 4:16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+4%3A16&version=NIV) tells us that we can approach God’s ‘throne of grace’ with confidence. Enjoy being welcomed into his presence today, as his deeply loved child.



## Bible passage: Nehemiah 6:1–14

##### Further Opposition to the Rebuilding

1 When word came to Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall and not a gap was left in it—though up to that time I had not set the doors in the gates- 2 Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: "Come, let us meet together in one of the villages on the plain of Ono."   
      But they were scheming to harm me; 3 so I sent messengers to them with this reply: "I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?" 4 Four times they sent me the same message, and each time I gave them the same answer.

5 Then, the fifth time, Sanballat sent his aide to me with the same message, and in his hand was an unsealed letter 6 in which was written:   
       "It is reported among the nations—and Geshem says it is true—that you and the Jews are plotting to revolt, and therefore you are building the wall. Moreover, according to these reports you are about to become their king 7 and have even appointed prophets to make this proclamation about you in Jerusalem: 'There is a king in Judah!' Now this report will get back to the king; so come, let us confer together."

8 I sent him this reply: "Nothing like what you are saying is happening; you are just making it up out of your head."

9 They were all trying to frighten us, thinking, "Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be completed."   
       But I prayed, "Now strengthen my hands."

10 One day I went to the house of Shemaiah son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetabel, who was shut in at his home. He said, "Let us meet in the house of God, inside the temple, and let us close the temple doors, because men are coming to kill you—by night they are coming to kill you."

11 But I said, "Should a man like me run away? Or should one like me go into the temple to save his life? I will not go!" 12 I realized that God had not sent him, but that he had prophesied against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. 13 He had been hired to intimidate me so that I would commit a sin by doing this, and then they would give me a bad name to discredit me.

14 Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, O my God, because of what they have done; remember also the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who have been trying to intimidate me.

## Explore

**Nothing new**

‘Fake news’ is nothing new. Long before the internet, it was being deployed to great effect by Israel’s enemies. Yet look at how Nehemiah dealt with it. Verse 8 is one of my absolute favourites in the whole Bible. You can hear the dripping scorn in Nehemiah’s voice as he says, ‘You are just making it up out of your head’!

**Discernment and confidence**

Throughout this passage Nehemiah gives us a wonderful example of discernment and utter confidence in what God had called him to do. He knew who he was, why he was there, and what really mattered. How? Because he knew his God.

**Steeped in prayer**

Throughout this week’s readings we have seen time and again that Nehemiah’s automatic response to every situation was prayer – he was steeped in it. As a result, he knew God deeply, knew what God had called him to do, and could call on God’s strength to do it, with complete assurance. This kind of wisdom and security are available to us, too. While God responds to the prayers of every believer, this deep-seated assurance develops as the fruit of years of habitual prayer and communion with God.

[Jennie Pollock](https://www.wordlive.org/AboutWordLive/Contributors/M-P/3527733.id#.VknC1XbhCUk)

## Respond

‘Lord, thank you that you hear us and love to give us your wisdom and guidance. Please help me to develop Nehemiah’s habit of bringing everything to you in prayer, and give me your wisdom and discernment for every situation. Amen.’

## Deeper Bible study

Sanballat recognises that taunts and threats have failed to halt the rebuilding project. He now adopts more radical tactics. Three plots to intimidate Nehemiah emerge. They all bear an uncanny resemblance to trials being faced by today’s persecuted churches.

The first is an apparently innocent invitation to parley on the Plain of Ono in the remote northwest corner of Judah on its frontier with Samaria (v 2). Nehemiah declines, suspicious that foul play – perhaps kidnap or murder – is intended.

Sanballat’s second tactic is to blackmail Nehemiah. He circulates an unfounded rumour in an open letter carrying a thinly veiled charge of sedition. Nehemiah forthrightly rejects the allegation (vs 5–9).

In the third plot Nehemiah’s opponents attempt to lure him into committing a form of blasphemy. They invite him to enter a part of the Temple reserved exclusively for priests (v 10) (see [Num 18:7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Num+18%3A7&version=NIV)). Again, Nehemiah sees through the ploy and declines the invitation (vs 11–13). His reaction anticipates the response which Jesus advocated to his disciples, to be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves when under attack ([Matt 10:16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt+10%3A16&version=NIV)).

It is reckoned that globally 200 million Christians are being persecuted for their faith. Some face arrest, kidnap and even death. All are denied basic human rights and face religious discrimination. These Christians lack the political clout Nehemiah enjoyed to defend himself and they look to those of us who live in democratic societies to support them. Today’s persecuted Christians share with Nehemiah the conviction that prayer is the key means of remaining steadfast (vs 9b,14,15). They invite you to join them in this vital ministry.

Request prayer information from any organisation which helps persecuted churches. Then stand shoulder to shoulder with your oppressed sisters and brothers before God’s throne of grace.

[Fergus MacDonald](https://www.wordlive.org/AboutWordLive/Contributors/M-P/3527733.id#.VknC1XbhCUk)

## Slander and gossip

Nehemiah was doing a great thing… that wasn’t going down so well with the neighbours. And so the slander begins.  
  
**The attacks**

After turning down four spurious out-of-town ‘meetings’ (vs 2–4) and denying a slander (vs 5–8), Nehemiah is also far from fooled by the prophet Shemaiah’s suggestion that he seek sanctuary in the temple (vs 10–13).   
  
It’s thought by scholars that Nehemiah was probably a eunuch as he served in the presence of both the Persian King and Queen. This was something that was incredibly rare for an uncastrated man. With eunuchs barred from certain areas of the temple under Jewish law, he would have instantly known that this ‘prophecy’ was false.  
  
**Opposition is inevitable**

When things are going surprisingly well there will always be those who oppose it. People who are afraid, suspicious or just plain jealous will try anything they can to derail the momentum.  
  
And it’s hardest when it’s coming from ‘inside’. Look at Jesus’ reaction to Peter (whom he had just named as ‘the Rock’) when he tried to derail the passage to the cross: ‘Get behind me, Satan!’ ([Matthew 16:21–23](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2016:21–23;&version=72;)).  
  
**Beware!**

‘Scandal’ is the opposite of ‘gospel’. It’s the bad news that sneaks in and strangles the good, and it will often come when you’re at your weakest (v 9). It takes strength and a lot of prayer to keep your head up.  
  
Jude Adam

# Today in the Word – 9/7/19

# Praise and Lament

**Read:** [**Psalms 9–10**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalms+9%e2%80%9310)**[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalms+9%e2%80%9310#fen-NIV-14023a)**][**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalms+9%e2%80%9310#fen-NIV-14023b)**]**

#### For the director of music. To the tune of “The Death of the Son.” A psalm of David.

1I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my heart;  
    I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.  
2I will be glad and rejoice in you;  
    I will sing the praises of your name, O Most High.

3My enemies turn back;  
    they stumble and perish before you.  
4For you have upheld my right and my cause,  
    sitting enthroned as the righteous judge.  
5You have rebuked the nations and destroyed the wicked;  
    you have blotted out their name for ever and ever.  
6Endless ruin has overtaken my enemies,  
    you have uprooted their cities;  
    even the memory of them has perished.

7The Lord reigns forever;  
    he has established his throne for judgment.  
8He rules the world in righteousness  
    and judges the peoples with equity.  
9The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed,  
    a stronghold in times of trouble.  
10Those who know your name trust in you,  
    for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.

11Sing the praises of the Lord, enthroned in Zion;  
    proclaim among the nations what he has done.  
12For he who avenges blood remembers;  
    he does not ignore the cries of the afflicted.

13Lord, see how my enemies persecute me!  
    Have mercy and lift me up from the gates of death,  
14that I may declare your praises  
    in the gates of Daughter Zion,  
    and there rejoice in your salvation.

15The nations have fallen into the pit they have dug;  
    their feet are caught in the net they have hidden.  
16The Lord is known by his acts of justice;  
    the wicked are ensnared by the work of their hands.[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalms+9%e2%80%9310#fen-NIV-14038c)]  
17The wicked go down to the realm of the dead,  
    all the nations that forget God.  
18But God will never forget the needy;  
    the hope of the afflicted will never perish.

19Arise, Lord, do not let mortals triumph;  
    let the nations be judged in your presence.  
20Strike them with terror, Lord;  
    let the nations know they are only mortal.

### Psalm 10[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalms+9%e2%80%9310#fen-NIV-14043d)]

1Why, Lord, do you stand far off?  
    Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?

2In his arrogance the wicked man hunts down the weak,  
    who are caught in the schemes he devises.  
3He boasts about the cravings of his heart;  
    he blesses the greedy and reviles the Lord.  
4In his pride the wicked man does not seek him;  
    in all his thoughts there is no room for God.  
5His ways are always prosperous;  
    your laws are rejected by[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalms+9%e2%80%9310#fen-NIV-14047e)] him;  
    he sneers at all his enemies.  
6He says to himself, “Nothing will ever shake me.”  
    He swears, “No one will ever do me harm.”

7His mouth is full of lies and threats;  
    trouble and evil are under his tongue.  
8He lies in wait near the villages;  
    from ambush he murders the innocent.  
His eyes watch in secret for his victims;  
9    like a lion in cover he lies in wait.  
He lies in wait to catch the helpless;  
    he catches the helpless and drags them off in his net.  
10His victims are crushed, they collapse;  
    they fall under his strength.  
11He says to himself, “God will never notice;  
    he covers his face and never sees.”

12Arise, Lord! Lift up your hand, O God.  
    Do not forget the helpless.  
13Why does the wicked man revile God?  
    Why does he say to himself,  
    “He won’t call me to account”?  
14But you, God, see the trouble of the afflicted;  
    you consider their grief and take it in hand.  
The victims commit themselves to you;  
    you are the helper of the fatherless.  
15Break the arm of the wicked man;  
    call the evildoer to account for his wickedness  
    that would not otherwise be found out.

16The Lord is King for ever and ever;  
    the nations will perish from his land.  
17You, Lord, hear the desire of the afflicted;  
    you encourage them, and you listen to their cry,  
18defending the fatherless and the oppressed,  
    so that mere earthly mortals  
    will never again strike terror.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Psalm 9:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalms+9%e2%80%9310#en-NIV-14023) Psalms 9 and 10 may originally have been a single acrostic poem in which alternating lines began with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In the Septuagint they constitute one psalm.
2. [Psalm 9:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalms+9%e2%80%9310#en-NIV-14023) In Hebrew texts 9:1-20 is numbered 9:2-21.
3. [Psalm 9:16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalms+9%e2%80%9310#en-NIV-14038) The Hebrew has Higgaion and Selah (words of uncertain meaning) here; Selah occurs also at the end of verse 20.
4. [Psalm 10:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalms+9%e2%80%9310#en-NIV-14043) Psalms 9 and 10 may originally have been a single acrostic poem in which alternating lines began with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In the Septuagint they constitute one psalm.
5. [Psalm 10:5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalms+9%e2%80%9310#en-NIV-14047) See Septuagint; Hebrew / they are haughty, and your laws are far from

In the preface to his commentary on the Psalms, John Calvin describes the book in this way, “I have been accustomed to call this book . . . ‘An Anatomy of all the Parts of the Soul,’ for there is not an emotion of which anyone can be conscious that is not here represented as a mirror.” The Psalms are a true reflection of the life we experience in a fallen world.

You, LORD, hear the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry. Psalm 10:17

Psalms 9 and 10 belong together as one psalm in two parts. Psalm 9 is the first half of an acrostic that runs through Psalm 10. David begins with a rousing call to give thanks to the Lord (9:1–2). He calls on people everywhere to rejoice because the Lord has defeated his enemies, established justice, and been a refuge for the poor and oppressed (9:3–10). The Lord reigns and “does not ignore the cries of the afflicted” (9:12).

Yet, his thanksgiving takes a turn and shifts to lament. Even though God had rescued David in the past, there was a new enemy who needed to be confronted. This man hunted down the vulnerable, was arrogant, and had “no room for God” in his thoughts (10:4). He rejected God’s law and prospered by abusing the “innocent’ and “helpless” (10:5, 8–10). David begs God to “arise” and “not forget the helpless” (10:12).

But at the end, David says he is confident in God. The Lord “hears the desire of the afflicted” and listens “to their cry” (10:17). David had seen God answer prayer in the past and he trusts Him for the future. The wicked would not get away with it forever. One day, all people will give an account before the Judge of all the earth. In this one poem, David travels from thanksgiving to lament and back again to rest in a place of hope.

### Apply the Word

With David, we can give thanks that the Lord has defeated our enemies. At the cross, Jesus “disarmed the powers and authorities” (Col. 2:15). We still struggle against “spiritual forces of this dark world” (Eph. 6:12) but can place our hope in Christ’s victory. One day every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord (Phil. 2:11).

### Pray with Us

Lord, like David, we also struggle with the afflictions of this world. And like David, we place our hope in you. Thank you that, echoing Psalm 10, we can say, “the Lord hears the desire of the afflicted.”

## BY Ryan Cook

# Our Daily Bread – 9/7/19

# Walking Backward

 **Read:** [**Philippians 2:1–11**](https://www.odb.org/2019/09/07/walking-backwards)

### Imitating Christ’s Humility

2 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

5In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

6Who, being in very nature[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Philippians+2%3A1%E2%80%9311#fen-NIV-29398a)] God,  
    did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;  
7rather, he made himself nothing  
    by taking the very nature[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Philippians+2%3A1%E2%80%9311#fen-NIV-29399b)] of a servant,  
    being made in human likeness.  
8And being found in appearance as a man,  
    he humbled himself  
    by becoming obedient to death—  
        even death on a cross!

9Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
    and gave him the name that is above every name,  
10that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
    in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
11and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
    to the glory of God the Father.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Philippians 2:6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Philippians+2%3A1%E2%80%9311#en-NIV-29398) Or in the form of
2. [Philippians 2:7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Philippians+2%3A1%E2%80%9311#en-NIV-29399) Or the form

Rather, [Jesus] made himself nothing. [Philippians 2:7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Philippians+2%3A7)

I stumbled upon footage from a British newsreel crew who filmed six-year-old Flannery O’Connor on her family farm in 1932. Flannery, who would go on to become an acclaimed US writer, caught the crew’s curiosity because she’d taught a chicken to walk backward. Apart from the novelty of the feat, I thought this glimpse of history was a perfect metaphor. Flannery, due to both her literary sensibilities and her spiritual convictions, spent her thirty-nine years definitely walking backward—thinking and writing in a counter-cultural way. Publishers and readers were entirely baffled by how her biblical themes ran counter to the religious views they expected.

A life that runs counter to the norm is inevitable for those who would truly imitate Jesus. Philippians tells us that Jesus, though His “very nature” was God, didn’t move in the predictable ways we would expect (2:6). He didn’t use His power “to his own advantage,” but “rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant” (vv. 6–7). Christ, the Lord of creation, surrendered to death for the sake of love. He didn’t seize prestige but embraced humility. He didn’t grab power but relinquished control. Jesus, in essence, walked backward—counter to the power-driven ways of the world.

Scripture tells us to do the same (v. 5). Like Jesus, we serve rather than dominate. We move toward humility rather than prominence. We give rather than take. In Jesus’s power, we walk backward.

By:  [Winn Collier](https://odb.org/author/wcollier/)

#### Reflect & Pray

How has Jesus demonstrated a way of walking backward in the world? Where is God calling you to live out Christ’s humble example?

The only way to healing and goodness, the only way to move forward, is to join Jesus in walking backward.

#### Insight

In Philippians 2:1–11, Paul calls believers to live counter-culturally. He wasn’t naive about the capacity for believers to live driven by “selfish ambition” (v. 3), by a self-interested need for power or control. It would be only natural for the Philippian believers to continue the habits learned in their culture, which Paul described as a “warped and crooked generation” (v. 15).

But Paul urged them to learn to live “worthy of the gospel of Christ” (1:27). And in chapter 2, he paints a stunning picture of the life believers are invited into, one of radical self-giving love (vv. 1–4). Living in a community marked by unity, joy, and freedom is only possible when we follow the example of Christ (v. 5) and remain rooted in, nourished by, and sustained by the Spirit (v. 1).

# God Calling – 9/7/19

# Everlasting Arms

**The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.   -   Deuteronomy 33:27**

Arms, sheltering Arms, express the loving tenderness of your Father (My Father) in Heaven.  Man, in his trouble and difficulty, needs nothing so much as a refuge.  A place to hide in. A place where none and nothing can touch him.

Say to yourself, "He is our Refuge." Say it until the truth sinks into your very soul. Say it until you know it - are so sure of it, that nothing can make you afraid.

Feel this not only until fear goes, but until Joy ripples through in its place. Refuge. Everlasting Arms so untiring, so safe - so sure.

I am as a wonder unto many; but thou art my strong refuge. Psalm 71:7

# My Utmost for His Highest – 9/8/19

# Do It Yourself (1)



…casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God… —[2 Corinthians 10:5](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=2+Corinthians+10%3A5)

**Determinedly Demolish Some Things.**

Deliverance from sin is not the same as deliverance from human nature. There are things in human nature, such as prejudices, that the saint can only destroy through sheer neglect. But there are other things that have to be destroyed through violence, that is, through God’s divine strength imparted by His Spirit. There are some things over which we are not to fight, but only to “stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord…” (see [Exodus 14:13](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+14:13)). But every theory or thought that raises itself up as a fortified barrier “against the knowledge of God” is to be determinedly demolished by drawing on God’s power, not through human effort or by compromise (see [2 Corinthians 10:4](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+10:4)).

It is only when God has transformed our nature and we have entered into the experience of sanctification that the fight begins. The warfare is not against sin; we can never fight against sin— Jesus Christ conquered that in His redemption of us. The conflict is waged over turning our natural life into a spiritual life. This is never done easily, nor does God intend that it be so. It is accomplished only through a series of moral choices. God does not make us holy in the sense that He makes our character holy. He makes us holy in the sense that He has made us innocent before Him. And then we have to turn that innocence into holy character through the moral choices we make. These choices are continually opposed and hostile to the things of our natural life which have become so deeply entrenched— the very things that raise themselves up as fortified barriers “against the knowledge of God.” We can either turn back, making ourselves of no value to the kingdom of God, or we can determinedly demolish these things, allowing Jesus to bring another son to glory (see [Hebrews 2:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+2:10)).

**WISDOM FROM OSWALD CHAMBERS**

The great point of Abraham’s faith in God was that he was prepared to do anything for God.  
Not Knowing Whither

# CCEL – 9/8/19

**Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.**—[DAN. 5:27.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Dan.5.html" \l "Dan.5.27)

The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him, actions are weighed.—That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.—The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.—Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.

What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?—What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts.—Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing.

[I Sam. 2:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iSam.2.html" \l "iSam.2.3). -[Luke 16:15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Luke.16.html" \l "Luke.16.15). -[I Sam. 16:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iSam.16.html" \l "iSam.16.7). -[Gal. 6:7,8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gal.6.html" \l "Gal.6.7).[Matt. 16:26](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.16.html" \l "Matt.16.26). -[Phi. 3:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.3.html" \l "Phil.3.7).[Psa. 51:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.51.html" \l "Ps.51.6). -[Psa. 17:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.17.html" \l "Ps.17.3).

“From me is thy fruit found.” **[Hosea 14:8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Hos.14.html" \l "Hos.14.8)**

Our fruit is found from our God as to union. The fruit of the branch is directly traceable to the root. Sever the connection, the branch dies, and no fruit is produced. By virtue of our union with Christ we bring forth fruit. Every bunch of grapes has been first in the root, it has passed through the stem, and flowed through the sap vessels, and fashioned itself externally into fruit, but it was first in the stem; so also every good work was first in Christ, and then is brought forth in us. O Christian, prize this precious union to Christ; for it must be the source of all the fruitfulness which thou canst hope to know. If thou wert not joined to Jesus Christ, thou wouldst be a barren bough indeed.

Our fruit comes from God as to spiritual providence. When the dew-drops fall from heaven, when the cloud looks down from on high, and is about to distil its liquid treasure, when the bright sun swells the berries of the cluster, each heavenly boon may whisper to the tree and say, “From me is thy fruit found.” The fruit owes much to the root—that is essential to fruitfulness—but it owes very much also to external influences. How much we owe to God’s grace-providence! in which he provides us constantly with quickening, teaching, consolation, strength, or whatever else we want. To this we owe our all of usefulness or virtue.

Our fruit comes from God as to wise husbandry. The gardener’s sharp-edged knife promotes the fruitfulness of the tree, by thinning the clusters, and by cutting off superfluous shoots. So is it, Christian, with that pruning which the Lord gives to thee. “My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” Since our God is the author of our spiritual graces, let us give to him all the glory of our salvation.

# Word Live – 9/8/19

# Holy brain-training

## Prepare

Praise the Lord for who he is and what he has done for us. Try to think of at least three things you love about him and three things he has done for you.



## Bible passage: Psalm 68

##### For the director of music. Of David. A psalm. A song.

1 May God arise, may his enemies be scattered;   
       may his foes flee before him.

2 As smoke is blown away by the wind,   
       may you blow them away;   
       as wax melts before the fire,   
       may the wicked perish before God.

3 But may the righteous be glad   
       and rejoice before God;   
       may they be happy and joyful.

4 Sing to God, sing praise to his name,   
       extol him who rides on the clouds —  
       his name is the LORD—  
       and rejoice before him.

5 A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows,   
       is God in his holy dwelling.

6 God sets the lonely in families,   
       he leads forth the prisoners with singing;   
       but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.

7 When you went out before your people, O God,   
       when you marched through the wasteland,   
       Selah

8 the earth shook,   
       the heavens poured down rain,   
       before God, the One of Sinai,   
       before God, the God of Israel.

9 You gave abundant showers, O God;   
       you refreshed your weary inheritance.

10 Your people settled in it,   
       and from your bounty, O God, you provided for the poor.

11 The Lord announced the word,   
       and great was the company of those who proclaimed it:

12 "Kings and armies flee in haste;   
       in the camps men divide the plunder.

13 Even while you sleep among the campfires,   
       the wings of my dove are sheathed with silver,   
       its feathers with shining gold."

14 When the Almighty scattered the kings in the land,   
       it was like snow fallen on Zalmon.

15 The mountains of Bashan are majestic mountains;   
       rugged are the mountains of Bashan.

16 Why gaze in envy, O rugged mountains,   
       at the mountain where God chooses to reign,   
       where the LORD himself will dwell forever?

17 The chariots of God are tens of thousands   
       and thousands of thousands;   
       the Lord has come from Sinai into his sanctuary.

18 When you ascended on high,   
       you led captives in your train;   
       you received gifts from men,   
       even from the rebellious—   
       that you, O LORD God, might dwell there.

19 Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior,   
       who daily bears our burdens.   
       Selah

20 Our God is a God who saves;   
       from the Sovereign LORD comes escape from death.

21 Surely God will crush the heads of his enemies,   
       the hairy crowns of those who go on in their sins.

22 The Lord says, "I will bring them from Bashan;   
       I will bring them from the depths of the sea,

23 that you may plunge your feet in the blood of your foes,   
       while the tongues of your dogs have their share."

24 Your procession has come into view, O God,   
       the procession of my God and King into the sanctuary.

25 In front are the singers, after them the musicians;   
       with them are the maidens playing tambourines.

26 Praise God in the great congregation;   
       praise the LORD in the assembly of Israel.

27 There is the little tribe of Benjamin, leading them,   
       there the great throng of Judah's princes,   
       and there the princes of Zebulun and of Naphtali.

28 Summon your power, O God ;   
       show us your strength, O God, as you have done before.

29 Because of your temple at Jerusalem   
       kings will bring you gifts.

30 Rebuke the beast among the reeds,   
       the herd of bulls among the calves of the nations.   
       Humbled, may it bring bars of silver.   
       Scatter the nations who delight in war.

31 Envoys will come from Egypt;   
       Cush will submit herself to God.

32 Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth,   
       sing praise to the Lord,   
       Selah

33 to him who rides the ancient skies above,   
       who thunders with mighty voice.

34 Proclaim the power of God,   
       whose majesty is over Israel,   
       whose power is in the skies.

35 You are awesome, O God, in your sanctuary;   
       the God of Israel gives power and strength to his people.   
       Praise be to God!

## Explore

**Prepared for trials**

Yesterday we saw how Nehemiah’s deep knowledge of and relationship with God equipped him to withstand the attacks that came his way. It is likely that psalms like this were part of the formation of that intimacy. These psalms telling of God’s glories and power have a couple of purposes – they give God the praise he deserves, but at the same time they teach us truth and prepare us for when trials come.

**Truth and praise**

We humans are forgetful creatures. We need to keep repeating the truths of God’s character and his deeds – out loud, if possible – to really embed them in our memories. This is one reason why traditional churches have liturgies and repeated prayers, and why we all sing ‘psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit’ of one form or another ([Colossians 3:16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+3%3A16&version=NIV)). It’s not brain-washing but its close relation, brain-training. By filling our minds repeatedly with truth and praise, we train them to hold this information and draw on it when needed.

**Remember to trust**

To trust God and remember to trust him when things get tough, we have to invest time in learning who he is, what he is like and what he has done.

[Jennie Pollock](https://www.wordlive.org/AboutWordLive/Contributors/M-P/3527733.id#.VknC1XbhCUk)

## Respond

There’s no time like the present! Read through the psalm again, thanking God for all it teaches us. Look at what it says about his character, the way he relates to us, and his salvation.

## Deeper Bible study

This is a complicated psalm. The key is to recognise that it is mapping, in epic idiom, the journey of the Ark of the Covenant from Sinai to Jerusalem. It opens by echoing the ancient cry as the Ark sets out, so conveying God’s presence to his people ([Num 10:35](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Num+10%3A35&version=NIV)). Verse 17 signals its arrival and installation in the Temple. The description of a liturgical procession (vs 24–27) offers a clue about the psalm’s origin. It may have been composed for David and the elders of Israel when they brought up the Ark into Jerusalem (1 Chr 15:25; 2 Chr 5:2–6). The Ark in procession dramatises the Lord’s victorious ascent to his earthly sanctuary in Zion (v 24).

God’s victories over his enemies up to this point in history have been emphatic (vs 2,14,21–23). The psalmist is convinced that ultimately all nations will acknowledge God’s rule (vs 29–32) ([Phil 2:10,11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Phil+2%3A10%2C11&version=NIV)), but in the meantime God’s reign is contested. That’s why the prayer of verse 28 is given to us as well as to the Israelites. Why not pray it now on behalf of your nation?

Psalm 68 helps us to understand Nehemiah’s love for Jerusalem. He is deeply concerned for the welfare of that city precisely because the Lord had chosen it as a dwelling place for his name ([Neh 1:9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Neh+1%3A9&version=NIV)). Paul perceives an even greater significance for the Lord’s victorious ascent to his earthly sanctuary. For him, it was a precursor of the resurrection and ascension of Christ when ‘he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people’ ([Eph 4:8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Eph+4%3A8&version=NRSV), NRSV). For us it is a psalm for Pentecost. Although Pentecost is now well past, the psalm invites you to thank Christ both for the gifts he bestows on your local church and also for the promise to lead you to the heavenly Jerusalem ([Heb 12:22](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Heb+12%3A22&version=NIV)).

‘The Lord is King! Lift up your voice, / O earth, and all you heavens, rejoice; / From world to world the song shall ring: / “The Lord omnipotent is King!”’1

1 J Conder 1789–1855

[Fergus MacDonald](https://www.wordlive.org/AboutWordLive/Contributors/M-P/3527733.id#.VknC1XbhCUk)

# Today in the Word – 9/8/19

# Flight or Faith

**Read:** [**Psalm 11**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+11)

#### For the director of music. Of David.

1In the Lord I take refuge.  
    How then can you say to me:  
    “Flee like a bird to your mountain.  
2For look, the wicked bend their bows;  
    they set their arrows against the strings  
to shoot from the shadows  
    at the upright in heart.  
3When the foundations are being destroyed,  
    what can the righteous do?”

4The Lord is in his holy temple;  
    the Lord is on his heavenly throne.  
He observes everyone on earth;  
    his eyes examine them.  
5The Lord examines the righteous,  
    but the wicked, those who love violence,  
    he hates with a passion.  
6On the wicked he will rain  
    fiery coals and burning sulfur;  
    a scorching wind will be their lot.

7For the Lord is righteous,  
    he loves justice;  
    the upright will see his face.

Thomas Edison was determined to invent a commercially viable electric lightbulb. He knew the value it would bring to the average person. Yet after 9,000 failed attempts, his friends and family began to ask if he was ready to give up. A newspaper reporter famously asked Edison if he felt like a failure, to which he replied, “Why would I feel like a failure? I now know definitely over 9,000 ways an electric lightbulb will not work.”

For the LORD is righteous, he loves justice; the upright will see his face. Psalm 11:7

In today’s psalm, David faced adversity. We do not know exactly what trial he was facing, but it was significant enough that people around him encouraged him to “flee like a bird to your mountain” (v. 1). Their advice was to run away! After all, wicked men were dangerous. They hid in the shadows and attempted to assassinate the righteous (v. 2). David’s problems were not just these men, but that the very foundations of society were being destroyed (v. 3). The moral order had fallen away. What could a righteous person do, but run?

David had an answer. Instead of running, we can choose to look up. “The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord is on his heavenly throne” (v. 4). The wicked may seem like they are getting away with murder. It may look like there is no hope for the upright. But David knew that was not the full picture. The Lord sits on the throne and will hold the wicked accountable. He is not aloof to human oppression, but carefully examines “everyone on earth” (v. 4). In His justice, He will judge the wicked and uphold the upright. We can trust in this because the Lord “hates” evil, but “loves justice” (vv. 5, 7). We can choose faith in our incorruptible God.

### Apply the Word

As we look at the society around us, it may seem like our very foundation is being destroyed. Christian values in many areas are not only ignored but are viewed as a problem. Our response is not to run away and hide but to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and live faithfully trusting in the Lord as our refuge (v. 1).

### Pray with Us

Lord Jesus, we pray we’ll heed the admonition that comes to us from today’s Scripture reading. As Psalm 11 encourages us, we pray we’ll choose faith in you and find our consolation and refuge in your love.

## BY Ryan Cook

# Our Daily Bread – 9/8/19

# Blue Lines

 **Read:** [**Proverbs 4:10–27**](https://www.odb.org/2019/09/08/blue-lines)

10Listen, my son, accept what I say,  
    and the years of your life will be many.  
11I instruct you in the way of wisdom  
    and lead you along straight paths.  
12When you walk, your steps will not be hampered;  
    when you run, you will not stumble.  
13Hold on to instruction, do not let it go;  
    guard it well, for it is your life.  
14Do not set foot on the path of the wicked  
    or walk in the way of evildoers.  
15Avoid it, do not travel on it;  
    turn from it and go on your way.  
16For they cannot rest until they do evil;  
    they are robbed of sleep till they make someone stumble.  
17They eat the bread of wickedness  
    and drink the wine of violence.

18The path of the righteous is like the morning sun,  
    shining ever brighter till the full light of day.  
19But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness;  
    they do not know what makes them stumble.

20My son, pay attention to what I say;  
    turn your ear to my words.  
21Do not let them out of your sight,  
    keep them within your heart;  
22for they are life to those who find them  
    and health to one’s whole body.  
23Above all else, guard your heart,  
    for everything you do flows from it.  
24Keep your mouth free of perversity;  
    keep corrupt talk far from your lips.  
25Let your eyes look straight ahead;  
    fix your gaze directly before you.  
26Give careful thought to the[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Proverbs+4%3A10%E2%80%9327#fen-NIV-16517a)] paths for your feet  
    and be steadfast in all your ways.  
27Do not turn to the right or the left;  
    keep your foot from evil.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Proverbs 4:26](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Proverbs+4%3A10%E2%80%9327#en-NIV-16517) Or Make level

I instruct you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths. [Proverbs 4:11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Proverbs+4%3A11)

Downhill skiing racecourses are often marked by swaths of blue paint sprayed across the white, snowy surface. The crude arcs might be a visual distraction for spectators but prove to be vital to both the success and safety of the competitors. The paint serves as a guide for the racers to visualize the fastest line to the bottom of the hill. Additionally, the contrast of the paint against the snow offers racers depth perception, which is critical to their safety when traveling at such high rates of speed.

Solomon begs his sons to seek wisdom in hopes of keeping them safe on the racecourse of life. Like the blue lines, wisdom, he says, will “lead [them] along straight paths” and keep them from stumbling (Proverbs 4:11–12). His deepest hope as a father is for his sons to enjoy a rich life, free from the damaging effects of living apart from the wisdom of God.

God, as our loving Father, offers us “blue-line” guidance in the Bible. While He’s given us the freedom to “ski” wherever we like, the wisdom He offers in the Scriptures, like racecourse markers, are “life to those who find them” (v. 22). When we turn from evil and walk instead with Him, our path will be lit with His righteousness, keeping our feet from stumbling and guiding us onward each day (vv. 12, 18).

By:  [Kirsten Holmberg](https://odb.org/author/kirstenholmberg/)

#### Reflect & Pray

How has reflecting on the wisdom of God kept you from stumbling? In what ways are you becoming more like Jesus?

God, thank You for Your Word. Help me to hold fast to the wisdom You offer. To learn more about how to get the most out of your Bible study time, visit [christianuniversity.org/SF106.](https://christianuniversity.org/SF106)

#### Insight

The structure of the book of Proverbs is distinctive. Chapters 1–9 form the counsel of a father to a son, including themes like the pursuit of wisdom and the need for sexual purity. Proverbs 10–31, however, are for the most part a collection of wise sayings that often contrast the wise living described in the first nine chapters with self-destructive foolishness.

# God Calling – 9/8/19

# Walk In My Love

When supply seems to have failed you must know it has not done so.  But you must, at the same time, look around to see what you can give away. Give away something.

There is always a stagnation, a blockage, when supply seems short.  Your giving clears that away, and lets the Spirit of My Supply flow clear.

A consciousness of My Presence as Love makes all Life different.  The consciousness of Me means the opening of your whole nature to Me and that brings relief. Relief brings Peace. Peace brings Joy. The "Peace that passeth all understanding" and the "Joy no man taketh from you."

Beyond all words is My Love and Care for you. Be sure of it. Rejoice in it. Walk in My Love. These words mean much. There is a joy, a spring, a gladness in the walk of those who walk in My Love. That walk becomes a glad conquering and triumphant march. So walk.

Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you ...  Deuteronomy 5:33

# My Utmost for His Highest – 9/9/19

# Do It Yourself (2)



…bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ… —[2 Corinthians 10:5](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=2+Corinthians+10%3A5)

**Determinedly Discipline Other Things.**

This is another difficult aspect of the strenuous nature of sainthood. Paul said, according to the Moffatt translation of this verse, “…I take every project prisoner to make it obey Christ….” So much Christian work today has never been disciplined, but has simply come into being by impulse! In our Lord’s life every project was disciplined to the will of His Father. There was never the slightest tendency to follow the impulse of His own will as distinct from His Father’s will— “the Son can do nothing of Himself…” ([John 5:19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+5:19)). Then compare this with what we do— we take “every thought” or project that comes to us by impulse and jump into action immediately, instead of imprisoning and disciplining ourselves to obey Christ.

Practical work for Christians is greatly overemphasized today, and the saints who are “bringing every thought [and project] into captivity” are criticized and told that they are not determined, and that they lack zeal for God or zeal for the souls of others. But true determination and zeal are found in obeying God, not in the inclination to serve Him that arises from our own undisciplined human nature. It is inconceivable, but true nevertheless, that saints are not “bringing every thought [and project] into captivity,” but are simply doing work for God that has been instigated by their own human nature, and has not been made spiritual through determined discipline.

We have a tendency to forget that a person is not only committed to Jesus Christ for salvation, but is also committed, responsible, and accountable to Jesus Christ’s view of God, the world, and of sin and the devil. This means that each person must recognize the responsibility to “be transformed by the renewing of [his] mind….” ([Romans 12:2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12:2)).

**WISDOM FROM OSWALD CHAMBERS**

Seeing is never believing: we interpret what we see in the light of what we believe. Faith is confidence in God before you see God emerging; therefore the nature of faith is that it must be tried.  He Shall Glorify Me, 494 R

# CCEL – 9/9/19

**He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.**—[LUKE 1:53.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Luke.1.html" \l "Luke.1.53)

Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods and have need of nothing: and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore and repent.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.—When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.—I am the Lord thy God . . . open thy mouth wide and I will fill it.

Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.—I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

[Rev. 3:17-19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rev.3.html" \l "Rev.3.17).[Matt. 5:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.5.html" \l "Matt.5.6). -[Isa. 41:17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.41.html" \l "Isa.41.17). -[Psa. 81:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.81.html" \l "Ps.81.10).[Isa. 55:2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.55.html" \l "Isa.55.2). -[John 6:35](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.6.html" \l "John.6.35).

“I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not.” **[Jeremiah 33:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jer.33.html" \l "Jer.33.3)**

There are different translations of these words. One version renders it, “I will shew thee great and fortified things.” Another, “Great and reserved things.” Now, there are reserved and special things in Christian experience: all the developments of spiritual life are not alike easy of attainment. There are the common frames and feelings of repentance, and faith, and joy, and hope, which are enjoyed by the entire family; but there is an upper realm of rapture, of communion, and conscious union with Christ, which is far from being the common dwelling-place of believers. We have not all the high privilege of John, to lean upon Jesus’ bosom; nor of Paul, to be caught up into the third heaven. There are heights in experimental knowledge of the things of God which the eagle’s eye of acumen and philosophic thought hath never seen: God alone can bear us there; but the chariot in which he takes us up, and the fiery steeds with which that chariot is dragged, are prevailing prayers. Prevailing prayer is victorious over the God of mercy, “By his strength he had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Beth-el, and there he spake with us.” Prevailing prayer takes the Christian to Carmel, and enables him to cover heaven with clouds of blessing, and earth with floods of mercy. Prevailing prayer bears the Christian aloft to Pisgah, and shows him the inheritance reserved; it elevates us to Tabor and transfigures us, till in the likeness of his Lord, as he is, so are we also in this world. If you would reach to something higher than ordinary grovelling experience, look to the Rock that is higher than you, and gaze with the eye of faith through the window of importunate prayer. When you open the window on your side, it will not be bolted on the other.

# Word Live – 9/9/19

# The real work begins

## Prepare

It’s easy to get excited about big projects, but harder to stay motivated for the long-haul work of faithful obedience. Ask God to renew your strength for your day-to-day walk with him.



## Bible passage: Nehemiah 6:15 – 7:3

##### The Completion of the Wall

15 So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of Elul, in fifty-two days. 16 When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God.

17 Also, in those days the nobles of Judah were sending many letters to Tobiah, and replies from Tobiah kept coming to them. 18 For many in Judah were under oath to him, since he was son-in-law to Shecaniah son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam son of Berekiah. 19 Moreover, they kept reporting to me his good deeds and then telling him what I said. And Tobiah sent letters to intimidate me.

#### Nehemiah 7

1 After the wall had been rebuilt and I had set the doors in place, the gatekeepers and the singers and the Levites were appointed. 2 I put in charge of Jerusalem my brother Hanani, along with Hananiah the commander of the citadel, because he was a man of integrity and feared God more than most men do. 3 I said to them, "The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot. While the gatekeepers are still on duty, have them shut the doors and bar them. Also appoint residents of Jerusalem as guards, some at their posts and some near their own houses."

## Explore

**Only just beginning**

Fifty-two days. Jerusalem’s walls had been in ruins for nearly 150 years; an earlier attempt at rebuilding had failed ([Ezra 4:11–23](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezra+4%3A11%E2%80%9323&version=NIV)). Then along came a man with vision, a plan, and building materials ([Nehemiah 2:7,8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nehemiah+2%3A7%2C8&version=NIV)) and in under two months the job was done. But Nehemiah knew the work was only just beginning – not least because he was still getting hate-mail from Tobiah.

He knew that his task had not been to build a wall, but to restore God’s city. And cities need to be lived in.

**Holistic understanding**

Look at the three kinds of people Nehemiah appointed: gatekeepers, to ensure the city’s security; musicians, to lead the people in worship; and Levites, those who could teach the law. It was a very holistic understanding of what humans need to flourish – physical safety, wise teaching and worship; wholeness in body, mind and spirit.

**People of integrity**

Over them all, he appointed not just the most gifted leaders he could find, but people of integrity, who feared God. He knew that the heart was more important than any outward display of competence – but more on that theme tomorrow.

[Jennie Pollock](https://www.wordlive.org/AboutWordLive/Contributors/M-P/3527733.id#.VknC1XbhCUk)

## Respond

Do a quick ‘spiritual health-check’: do you feel physically safe? Do you worship regularly in song? Are you receiving good biblical teaching? If you feel lacking in any of these areas, ask God to supply your need, and act on any promptings you feel from him.

## Deeper Bible study

Today we come to a turning point in the book of Nehemiah. Despite opposition, the wall has been rebuilt at remarkable speed (6:15). Internal despair and external opposition have been overcome by Governor Nehemiah’s prayerful, decisive and enthusiastic leadership. But the governor’s problems are by no means over. Sanballat and his accomplices lose face (v 16) but they don’t disappear. The nobles of Judah are reluctant to break relations with Tobiah, who continues to exert considerable influence in Jerusalem.

Although Tobiah is a Samaritan official, his name suggests Jewish connections. The ending ‘iah’ is a shorter version of Yahweh, God’s covenant name in the Old Testament, rendered Lord in most English versions of the Bible. Tobiah’s wife and daughter-in-law are Jewish (v 18). Sanballat is a Babylonian name, but he also has Judean links. His daughter is married to a member of the high priestly family in Jerusalem ([Neh 13:28](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Neh+13%3A28&version=NIV)). The narrative suggests, however, that any religious links with Judaism must be nominal for both men. Indeed, they may be descendants of the foreign peoples settled in Samaria some 280 years previously. These settlers worshipped the Lord alongside their idols ([2 Kings 17:24,29–41](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Kings+17%3A24%2C29%E2%80%9341&version=NIV)).

Religious nominalism involves divided loyalties, creating problems for Nehemiah then (vs 17–19) and also for Christian leaders today. Over the past 40 years the proportion of notional Christians has declined by almost one fifth. These are defined as church members who believe in God, but never attend church (except perhaps at Christmas or Easter). It is reckoned they compose almost 40 per cent of the British population, showing, according to David Boas of University College London, a ‘fuzzy fidelity’.1 Spend some quality time today praying that notional Christians in your country may find a life-transforming faith. Pray especially for those you may know.

Find an opportunity to reflect with others how you all might witness more meaningfully to notional Christians.

1 Brierley Consultancy, London, Future First, No 6, Dec 2009 and No 56, April 2018

[Fergus MacDonald](https://www.wordlive.org/AboutWordLive/Contributors/M-P/3527733.id#.VknC1XbhCUk)

## Prayer points

Opposition to God’s people didn’t stop with Nehemiah. For up-to-date news reports of Christians suffering persecution visit these websites:  
  
• [www.christianpersecution.info](http://www.christianpersecution.info)   
  
• [www.persecution.org](http://www.persecution.org)  
  
• [www.opendoorsuk.org](http://www.opendoorsuk.org)  
  
Take a few minutes to read what is going on and then pray for those who are suffering. You may like to go back to the sites at regular intervals over the next few weeks so that you can go on praying for the same situations.  
  
Mike Law

# Today in the Word – 9/9/19

# Human Words and God’s Words

### Read: [Psalm 12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+12)[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+12#fen-NIV-14068a)]

#### For the director of music. According to sheminith.[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+12#fen-NIV-14068b)] A psalm of David.

1Help, Lord, for no one is faithful anymore;  
    those who are loyal have vanished from the human race.  
2Everyone lies to their neighbor;  
    they flatter with their lips  
    but harbor deception in their hearts.

3May the Lord silence all flattering lips  
    and every boastful tongue—  
4those who say,  
    “By our tongues we will prevail;  
    our own lips will defend us—who is lord over us?”

5“Because the poor are plundered and the needy groan,  
    I will now arise,” says the Lord.  
    “I will protect them from those who malign them.”  
6And the words of the Lord are flawless,  
    like silver purified in a crucible,  
    like gold[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+12#fen-NIV-14073c)] refined seven times.

7You, Lord, will keep the needy safe  
    and will protect us forever from the wicked,  
8who freely strut about  
    when what is vile is honored by the human race.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Psalm 12:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+12#en-NIV-14068) In Hebrew texts 12:1-8 is numbered 12:2-9.
2. [Psalm 12:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+12#en-NIV-14068) Title: Probably a musical term
3. [Psalm 12:6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+12#en-NIV-14073) Probable reading of the original Hebrew text; Masoretic Text earth

In 2002, a researcher from the University of Massachusetts studied how often people tell a lie during daily conversations. He found that 60 percent of adults were not able to get through a ten-minute conversation without lying at least once. Most people lied three times. We are surrounded by lies, not just from our neighbors and colleagues, but from advertisers, politicians, and often social media.

And the words of the LORD are flawless, like silver purified in a crucible, like gold refined seven times. Psalm 12:6

In Psalm 12, David lamented that “everyone lies to their neighbor” (v. 2). He knew that outright lies were not the only problem. He talked about flattery, boasting, and manipulation (vv. 2–3). The reason people are deceptive with their speech is because it can help achieve desired results. When Satan wanted to entice Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit in the garden, he did it through deceptive speech. David’s adversaries in this psalm boast, “By our tongues we will prevail; our own lips will defend us—who is lord over us?” (v. 4).

When powerful people practice deception, it is often the poor and vulnerable who suffer. In this psalm, God answers David’s lament. “Because the poor are plundered and the needy groan, I will now arise” (v. 5). The deceptive speech of the enemy is countered by God’s word. Not only did God answer David’s prayer in this particular situation, but we also know that in the end justice will be achieved for all. Liars will not win at the end. Our hope is in the promise of Christ’s return to judge the living and the dead. We can rest in this certain hope because it is promised in God’s Word. His Word is not like the empty words of deceivers, but “like silver purified in a crucible, like gold refined seven times” (v. 6).

### Apply the Word

In Psalm 119, the psalmist declares “I delight in your commands because I love them” (v. 47). God’s Word is a precious gift. In a world full of lies, we can have complete confidence in the truth and trustworthiness of God’s promises as revealed to us in Scripture. Take a few minutes today to thank the Lord for His perfect and life-giving Word.

### Pray with Us

Would you support the Moody Bible Institute trustees in prayer today? Ask the Holy Spirit to guide them as they serve Moody’s ministries and make decisions about MBI’s future. For the full list of the Trustees’ names, please turn to page 5.

## BY Ryan Cook

# Our Daily Bread – 9/9/19

# When We Know Who Wins

 **Read:** [**Revelation 21:1–5**](https://www.odb.org/2019/09/09/when-we-know-who-wins)

### A New Heaven and a New Earth

21 Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,”[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Revelation+21%3A1%E2%80%935#fen-NIV-31055a)] for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Revelation+21%3A1%E2%80%935#fen-NIV-31058b)] or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

5He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

#### Footnotes:

1. [Revelation 21:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Revelation+21%3A1%E2%80%935#en-NIV-31055) Isaiah 65:17
2. [Revelation 21:4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Revelation+21%3A1%E2%80%935#en-NIV-31058) Isaiah 25:8

He will wipe every tear from their eyes. [Revelation 21:4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Revelation+21%3A4)

My supervisor is a huge fan of a certain college basketball team. This year, they won the national championship, so another coworker texted him congratulations. The only problem was my boss hadn’t yet had a chance to watch the final game! He was frustrated, he said, knowing the outcome beforehand. But, he admitted, at least when he watched the game he wasn’t nervous when the score stayed close to the end. He knew who won!

We never really know what tomorrow will hold. Some days can feel mundane and tedious, while other days are filled with joy. Still other times, life can be grueling, agonizing even, for long periods of time.

But despite life’s unpredictable ups and downs, we can still be securely grounded in God’s peace. Because, like my supervisor, we know the end of the story. We know who “wins.”

Revelation, the Bible’s final book, lifts the curtain on that spectacular finale. After the final defeat of death and evil (20:10, 14), John describes a beautiful victory scene (21:1–3) where God makes His home with His people (v. 3) and wipes “every tear from their eyes” in a world with “no more death or mourning or crying or pain” (v. 4).

On difficult days, we can cling to this promise. No more loss or weeping. No more what-ifs or broken hearts. Instead, we’ll spend eternity together with our Savior. What a glorious celebration that will be!

By:  [Adam Holz](https://odb.org/author/adamholz/)

#### Reflect & Pray

How can the hope of heaven give you strength? How might your favorite “happily ever after” story echo Revelation 21?

One day God will soothe every hurt, heal every wound, and wipe away every tear.

#### Insight

If we’re not careful, our concept of heaven can be cartoonish. We might picture clouds and harps and sweet-looking cherub figures. This isn’t the idea Revelation presents. The clouds John describes in Revelation are associated with judgment and great violence (10:1; 14:14–16). The harp-like “music” heard in chapter 14 is like the sound “of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder” (v. 2). And the angelic beings appear absolutely terrifying (14:6–20). Yet here in chapter 21 we read one of the most comforting passages ever written. And the biggest comfort is that “God’s dwelling place is now among the people” (v. 3). We don’t know exactly how this works, but when Jesus Himself tells us “I am making everything new!” (v. 5), we know it will be grand. This old world is described as “very good” (Genesis 1:31). Why would God’s new heaven and earth be less so?

# God Calling – 9/9/19

# Cultivate  --  Yourself

**In Thy Strength we conquer.**

Yes! Your conquering Power you gain from Me. There can be no failure with me. The secret of success then is Life with Me.

Do you want to make the best of life? Then live very near to Me, the Master and Giver of all Life.

Your reward will be sure. It will be perfect success, but My success.

Sometimes the success of souls won, sometimes the success of disease cured, and devils cast out. Sometimes the success of a finished sacrifice as on Calvary. Sometimes the success of one who answered never a word in the face of the scorn and torture and jeering cries of his enemies, or the success of a Risen Savior as He walked through the Garden of Joseph of Arimathea on that first Easter morning.

But My success. The world may deem you failures. The world judges not as I judge.

Bend your knees in wonder before My revelation. The joy of seeing Spiritual Truths is a great Joy. When the Heavens are opened and the Voice speaks, not to all hearts, but to the faithful loving hearts.

Remember your great field of labor is yourself. That is your first task, the weeding, the planting, digging, pruning, bearing fruit. When that is done I lead you out into other fields.

Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savior of his knowledge by us in every place. 2 Corinthians 2:14